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TUNDRA

By

THE EDINGTONS

*Based on the life-story told them
by "Bert" Hansen, former U. S.
Deputy Marshal, Fourth District
of Alaska*



*Marshal Hansen giving
first aid to Kune, one
of his favorite Siberian
huskies.*

In this book The Edingtons turn aside from their series of highly successful mystery tales to tell the amazing story which they heard from the lips of "Bert" Hansen, former Deputy Marshal and the greatest "musher" that Alaska has known in years.

It is the story of an exceptional boy who beat his way to Alaska in 1896, before the Klondike gold rush, who tramped it adventurously, a hobo in search of romance and the odd job, and who eventually became Deputy U. S. Marshal for that vast section of Alaska which includes the greater part of the wild, unknown interior. With his champion dog teams he "mushed" more than sixty thousand miles through every part of the country, with the thermometer often at sixty below zero; tracking criminals, saving lives, once even crossing the great frozen tundra all the way to the Arctic Ocean in a desperate mush to bring back the body of a white prospector supposed to have been murdered by Indians.

Through the words of his narrators, Hansen makes you seem a part of this amazing world, where only the strong survive and only the brave win out. Loving the land and the fight it gives every man for existence, he creates a fascinating scene for the reader, introduces him to many strange characters, exiles and outcasts, and weaves a tale of heroism, suffering and endurance—both of man and of dog—that wins a new respect for those who live and labor in the frozen countries near the poles.

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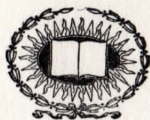
New York

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ROMANCE AND ADVENTURE
ON ALASKAN TRAILS

*As told by former
Deputy United States Marshal
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to*

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New York • London

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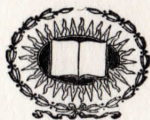
*Soldier, Patriot and former United
States Marshal, Alaska, this book
is dedicated by the man who told
the story and the writers who
put it on paper.*

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INTRODUCTION

Through a thousand and one nights these tales came to us. From our home, here in front of our fireplace, he took our minds far into the Northland; his country, the land that still calls to his restless soul from out its vast silences.

The glowing logs faded away. In their place came visions of bleak wilderness trails; of dogs mushing onward into blizzard-strafted wastes; of men driven crazy from loneliness; of the woman whose life he failed to save. Through his eyes we saw Alaska! Far flung frontier of the world!

Tales there were of hardship beyond mortal comprehension; of a cold that bit into the very marrow and left its victim asleep forever in an unknown grave. Amusing tales! Grim tales! Tragic tales!

We traveled with him a thousand and one trails. We met the men he met; came to know them almost as he had known them. We sat with him around the camp-fires of the Chandalar, felt with him their calculating eyes upon him, sensed their intent to kill him.

Hundreds of miles farther on within their country lay the object of his mission. So on we went with him, sneaking out of their village in the dead of night, in fear lest the dogs give tongue; and thence away, on and on, into the frozen Northland where but few

white men had ever been. Days of travel north, always north! Food running low! Dogs pushed to the limit! A lone man searching a vast, cold, white stillness for but one object.

And then the end of the trail—a body wrapped in canvas on a toboggan and Hansen, now a scarecrow man, but a mere skeleton of his former self, turning his dogs for a thousand mile dash back to civilization.

He made us live it with him, made us see the storms, feel the cold, sense the dangers. We felt with him that menace of death, that sinking of the spirit worse than death, which came when he found his first cache of grub destroyed—with yet three hundred miles to go. We gazed off into the white wilderness distances with the hope that the next one would be waiting. Again disaster! Forced mushes now!

Then came days, days and nights without end, when starving dogs mushed onward, ever onward, at the hoarse commands of the starving man behind them.

We saw the night camps on the wind-swept tundra! Where man and dog crawled between canvas-covered toboggans and snuggled together to live.

We learned to know his dogs, their peculiarities, their loyalty. They march before us even as we write, those record holders of the wilderness trails! Tuesday!—incomparable leader, veteran of twenty thousand miles! Major, killer dog!—unconquerable spirit of the wilds! Head always swinging low, even on the trail—all set to kill. A grip of a paw, a slash under the belly with those terrible fangs, and, never stopping to see the re-

sults of his tactics, on to the next of his adversaries. No need to look. He knew! And never did he waste a motion, even in his fighting. Major! Spending the last of his gaunt strength to bring a master, who lay unconscious over the handlebars, into Fort Yukon and to safety.

Tip!—brother of Major—his huge bulk one mass of loyalty. Sox! Sunday! Brownie! Monkey! Who gave their all and who lie in frozen graves far out on that silent tundra.

Chena (pronounced *Chu-no-ab*), Malemute, his stub tail carried like a proud standard, pointed ears tilted forward, sharp teeth always bared, grinning mirthlessly, and always fighting! Recking no odds, never admitting defeat; slipping his collar one night at Kockrines and doing his damndest to kill all the dogs in the village. Chena! Pacing proudly in the team, keeping his line taut yet never pulling a pound. Foxy, crafty killer!

And Mike! MacKenzie River Husky! Trained with infinite patience to be a loose leader—and spoiled through kindness.

He talked of men until we came to know them. There was George Loper, living alone in his cabin at the junction of Faith, Hope and Charity creeks.

"Faith, Hope and Charity should, according to Bible standards lead somewhere close to Heaven," was the way Marshal Hansen began this story; "but Alaska don't run to the Bible much. Instead of Heaven those creeks led to Old George Loper's cabin. I had a subpoena for Loper once. I served the papers, but— For twenty years old

George sat there, a rifle over his knees, waiting. God help the man he was waiting for! Alaska sure makes stayers out of its people. Or, it kills 'em.

"Then there was the Melozi Kid. Not a bad little wart. Just got cocky and thought he'd make a fool out of our office. Outlaw? Yes! Sold whisky to the Indians. Heard I had a fast dog team, the fastest in Alaska. Had a pretty good idea of his own. What could I do when he came right out and challenged me? Dared me and our office to catch him. I had to do it or become the laughing-stock of Alaska. And he came pretty near making me this before that chase ended.

"By the way, did I ever tell you about O'Toole? You'd think men couldn't hobo it in Alaska. But they can! O'Toole and I tried it. Then there's the Whistling Kid! Known all over the country. Has whistled his way into every road-house in the interior. If he ever did a day's work I never heard of it. Oh, yes, you can be a bum in my country. However, I think O'Toole and I did more damage in the short time we were at it than all of the rest put together!"

And so, night after night he talked and we listened. Then, too, there were pictures. Hundreds of pictures! Pictures he had taken on the trails of Alaska. We saw newspaper clippings covering some of his epic mushes; read letters from those over him in the service, saw copies of official telegrams. He gave names, dates and places. Nor could you doubt him if you could hear him.

A tall man, surprisingly young in years, spare, rangy form, wide shoulders, long slender legs, long arms with

rough, bony hands set on the smallest wrists we ever saw on a big man. A hundred and ninety pounds he used to weigh before he returned from the Chandalar. After that they gave him but three months to live. A skeleton of himself, the doctors told him frankly he would never make the long mushes again. Never more would he hear the wolf call of his dogs beside the trail on moonlit nights.

But he fooled them! Save for the deep lines in his face one would never know what he has suffered, what a toll that land has exacted from him. Yet it is the face that holds you, brings back to you again a realization of the life he lived.

Harsh contours whose every line speaks the Danish blood within him, a hard stubborn jaw, a high forehead. The eyes the outstanding feature. Set deep within bony caverns, purple lined, they gleam out from under sandy brows like polished ice.

Perhaps you have seen the glint of a sunbeam from the face of a glacier. If you have you get some idea of the impression his eyes make upon one. They are the bluest blue we have ever seen, yet somewhere in their depths—one hardly feels it is in the pigmentation—gray flecks scintillate as he relives some epic of the trails.

Hard those eyes are, hard, bleak, and cold, with a steadiness that makes you think of vast white silences. You know they have peered over unknown expanses of white wilderness with just such a cold gleam. One sees poise there also, the poise that comes with internal

thoughts well divined, with deeds well done. In him is a sureness one finds only sustaining the dweller of the distances!

And yet we have seen those eyes soften and the tears come to course uncontrolled down his deep-lined cheeks when he tells over and over again of the woman whose life he tried in vain to save.

So, deep within him, even as on the surface, are the scars of life's battles. Outward scars there are in plenty. We have seen long white weals on his body, the fang marks of the husky. When we asked him where he got that long slash which starts somewhere near the elbow and runs upwards to the shoulder, he laughed grimly, and said, "My foot slipped on the trail and I lit beside Major!"

And then, holding out his hands he showed us other mementos of this demon dog of the arctic. Every finger has its scar, some of them bitten through.

"Major, the devil. He's the only dog I ever beat. I don't believe in beating dogs. But that fellow! I made up my mind I'd either conquer him or kill him. 'Twas just after he tried to kill a little girl, the daughter of a friend of mine. It was a double dog chain I used. And I beat him! Beat him until I couldn't wield that chain any longer. But that dog wasn't human. Something within him made him as he was.

"Sometimes I think of that beating. Sometimes I wish I could go back and have that all to do differently. But one doesn't know the future, and when has man in anger known anything but his own immediate deter-

mination? And yet it is to that dog I owe in great measure the fact that I am here telling you about Alaska."

There you have the man, some sight of his inner philosophy, some idea of the life he lived. He traveled over sixty thousand miles behind dog teams in Alaska. There is hardly a trail he has not been over time and time again.

He stands to-day one of the very few men who have ever crossed the Endicott Range and on into the arctic. And this man made this trip in the dead of winter; one of the worst winters Alaska has ever known; without compass, without any idea of his destination save the name of an unknown river.

What hidden sense is possessed by the men of this blood that leads them unerringly over unknown trails to their destination? Like Lindbergh, this man has an uncanny, instinctive sense of direction. To that, as much as all else perhaps, he owes the fact that he is still living. Blazing the way over untraveled trails, into unseen regions, daring all and fearing nothing! With the spirit of youth, adventurous youth, he went, saw and remembered.

This book is our attempt to put some of those experiences before you. So come, sit with us before our fire and listen as former Deputy United States Marshal Hansen, of the Fourth District of Alaska, relives again his life during those years he spent on the trails of the Northland.

THE AUTHORS.

TWO ALASKAN TRADER HORNS

TUNDRA: Romance and Adventure on Alaska Trails. As Told by Former Deputy United States Marshal Hansen to The Eddingtons. The Century Company, New York

"Alaska? Aye, I know her! I've rushed from her front door right out through the back. I've driven my dogs from one end of her to the other. I've sung to them in parts of her where no white man has stepped foot before! I know her as well as any man can know her, and that's saying a lot—and leaving a lot unsaid!" Thus Bert Hansen begins his story, written by The Eddingtons from his account in the "Trader Horn" manner.

As a penniless youth in 1896 he got to Juneau, at that time "a big town of one long scraggly street lined with frame buildings and bordered by a plank sidewalk," with plenty of saloons and gambling halls. He saw first off a sign, reading, "Wanted—Packer, with a weak head and a strong back." He got the job, which no other white man would take. The round trip from

the McGinnis mine to Juneau, thirty-eight miles, had to be made once a week, and supplies packed from cabin to mine on other days. He nearly worked himself to death before he got another job.

In 1900 he went to Dawson, which had 40,000 gold-mad inhabitants, "the men gold miners and the women, in the main, gold diggers." He did not stay there long. He was always on the move. Wherever there was activity Bert Hansen was to be found. On a railroad job at Cordova, "mushing" from Valdez to Fairbanks in the winter, snow-bound with a surveying gang, fighting claim-jumpers and usually ranging himself on the side of law and order. His friendship with United States Marshal Love helped him, but it was his courage and love of action and his endurance that made him successful.

He brings back to life this excellent mining camp and makes it picturesque and exciting by the introduction of incidents ordinarily found only in fiction. As the Eddingtons write it, Hansen's story

(Continued on Page 22, Column 3)

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BOOK

I

THE OUTLAW

"There's a race of men that don't fit in,
A race that can't stay still;
So they break the heart of kith and kin,
And they roam the world at will."

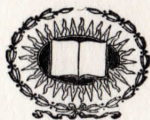
ROBERT W. SERVICE—"The Men That Don't Fit In"

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ON ALASKAN TRAILS

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CHAPTER I

TRUE ALASKANS

ALASKA? Aye, I know her! I've mushed from her front door right out through the back. I've driven my dogs from one end of her to the other. I've sung to them in parts of her where no white man has stepped foot before! I know her as well as any man can know her, and that's saying a lot—and leaving a lot unsaid!

For she's too big for one man's knowing! Too vast for comprehension! But there is the feel of her; that something, you can't put it into words, that creeps into a man and binds him to her. It makes every Alaskan who is on the outside, long for the day when he can once more plant his mucklucks in her snows, grip the hand of his fellow sour-dough, and be greeted with that greeting which is given only to those who have proved their right to it. "Hello, Alaskan!"

There is a saying in Alaska that no man is an Alaskan who has not seen the ice go out of her rivers, which means he has proved himself by living through one of her winters, by having pitted his strength against the cold she hurls at him; the blizzards, the dead white silences, the dangers of the trail, and has at last stood triumphant on the banks of her mighty, ice-locked waters shouting with sheer joy at the glorious spectacle of the "break-up" in the spring!

Then only is he admitted into that brotherhood of the North which has no secret password, but that carries its proof in a man's face, in the very sureness of him that can come only with a good fight well fought.

Few outsiders realize, even to the smallest degree just what Alaska is. To them it is but a name, a yellow place on the map, a land of perpetual snow and ice, where nobody lives except a strange race of men who dig for gold—and risk the chance of being frozen stiff as an icicle.

Alaska! She is almost one-fifth as large as the United States. Her rivers are among the greatest in the world. Up the Yukon for almost its entire length steamers of shallow draught ply their way. For hundreds of miles it is a majestic stream, in width ranging from six miles at a point some distance above its delta to a mile farther up-stream. It drains virtually all of what is known as the Interior, and with the Kuskokwim—which some say was once the course of the Yukon—it forms one of the large drainage systems of the world. The Yukon has its beginnings in that string of lakes that are now familiar names because of the great gold rush of ninety-eight: Lake Atlin, Lake Bennett, Upper and Lower Le Barge. The Yukon not only drains the northern slope of the Alaskan range but also the southern slope of the Endicotts, that mountain barrier that divides the Interior Alaska from the arctic.

There are glaciers in Alaska that are larger than Switzerland. The Malispina Glacier is fed by Mt. St. Elias and the Fairweather Range, and there are Childs

and Miles Glaciers. I wish you could see them as I saw them from a little poling boat on the Copper River—Childs Glacier rising three hundred feet of sheer ice above the river and Miles Glacier is almost as high. Both are about three miles wide, both glisten with all the colors of the rainbow; great masses break away from their faces to thunder into the Copper River, making tidal waves that many times have ended a boat's journey and the life of the men in it.

And the Endicotts! I've seen them from angles that perhaps no white man ever gazed from before, the most beautiful mountain range in the world, I believe. Anyway, I don't see how the Creator could improve His work there. Sheer spires, and needle-like pinnacles thrust up out of their glacier-clad slopes, reaching into the realm of the stars, while across from them, far off to the south, and just showing above the dim horizon, the red ball that is the sun, a red ball that is without warmth, without promise, without comfort.

Clean belts of spruce, cathedral aisles of birch, immaculate in their garments of white, and the glint and sparkle of ice-bound rivers beneath whose clear waters lie the frozen, gold-laden gravel that will always lure man to fortune or to death! And in the Interior, the deep-cut trails, crimson now and then from the bleeding feet of man's best friend in that beautiful, cruel land—his dogs!

I was sixteen when I went to Alaska; that was in ninety-six, when Carmack discovered gold on the Klondike, but two years before the "rush," about which

much has been written by men who were in it, and by men who got it at second hand. To folks on the outside, Alaska sprang into being overnight, when gold was discovered there above Dawson, and she didn't exist before.

You're wrong, brother. Alaska has been there since the beginning of time, and she'll be there, just as rich, just as cruel, just as mighty, when the last miner has broken his pick. Why, even when I was a kid, there were old-timers, true Alaskans, who snorted with scorn at the mob of gold-crazed cheechakos pouring into Dyea.

The maps you get now show Skagway as a town at the head of the Lynn Canal. When I went into Alaska, Skagway did not exist. One day it wasn't, and the next morning it was. It was a boom town, and the only reason it lived after the boom, was because of the White Pass and Yukon Railway, which then wasn't even a thought. One of the first rush towns was Dyea, a shack town across from where Skagway later popped up. The real old-timers of the first gold-rush went over Chilkoot Pass by way of Dyea, and thence to the Klondike. Oh yes, I went over the pass, along with the rest of the men, horses, pigs, dogs, mules and sheep, but that was only a brief experience in my life as an Alaskan, and while it was packed full of misery and danger for the cheechako, for an Alaskan it only meant one phase in the life of the country.

Just a mad mob, loaded to the guards and covered with muck to the hilt, scrambling madly to get away

from the coast where it had been dumped, to the place where gold could be picked off the ground just for the bending over! That, in a few lines, was the gold-rush.

Northwest of Skagway, across the Gulf of Alaska, is Cordova, now also famous because it's at the head of the Copper River and the starting-point of the Northwestern Railroad, which winds through some of the most beautiful scenery in Alaska, perhaps in the world. By the way, I helped to build that railroad, swung one of the first mattocks on the grades, but that's another story we'll come to later.

Beyond Cordova comes Valdez, now gateway to the Interior of Alaska. At the time when I first went into the country nearly all supplies were taken into the Interior by way of St. Michael, near the mouth of the Yukon, and freighted up the river during the short summer months when it is navigable to steamers. All the territory from Cordova up to Juneau and beyond, is known as southeastern Alaska. From Cordova, on into the North, by way of the coast, one must skirt the Alaskan Peninsula, that long strip of land, which with its adjacent islands, extends almost to the coast of Asia. The steamer lanes cut west of the peninsula, and run north past Unimak Island, on to the mouth of the Yukon, and thence to Nome, on the Seward Peninsula.

The old Richardson Trail, over which I mushed, is now a fine automobile highway. It crosses the divide of the main Alaskan Range, after climbing up out of the Copper River Valley, and then drops down the north side into the valley of the Big Delta River. At this

point the traveler would be in what is known as the Interior of Alaska, and from there the waters of the Delta rivers finally flow into the Tanana and thence to the Yukon. Roughly, the Interior is all that country drained by the Yukon River.

North of the Yukon and its tributaries is the Endicott Range, sprawling with majestic spires across the North of Alaska, from east to west, to a point where it slopes away toward the tundra country. West the waters from these mountains flow into the Kotzebue Sound by way of the Kobuk and the Noatak rivers. From the northern slopes the waters find their way into the Arctic Ocean by means of several large rivers, the Colville, the Anaktuvuk, a branch of the Colville, the Sagavariiktok and the Kugura, formerly called the Canning River.

The Endicotts form the barrier that divides the Yukon basin from the arctic, known as the arctic slope. And there, for league upon league, is a vast, silent waste, unpeopled, unknown, save to that handful of men who dared the dangers and the frozen desolation of the tundra. A white empire, its rivers designated on the map by "those vague dotted lines" which mean a conjectural course, merely to show that such rivers exist!

Well, that's an outline sketch of most of Alaska, but if you want a few intimate details; if you want to see the country as I have seen it, I'll have to go back and re-live with you the years I mushed her trails!

CHAPTER II

A HUNGRY LAD

A WORD picture of the boy who in time became a Deputy United States Marshal of Alaska.

It was the seventeenth day of December, 1896, in Seattle, and raining as only it can rain in the Northwest when the storm king drives in from the broad Pacific. The waterfront . . . and warped to the dock the old steamboat, *Cottage City*, being loaded for her voyage to Southeastern Alaska. For four hours a boy had stood there in the rain, gazing wistfully at the boat that to him meant only romance and adventure.

Clutched tightly in one bony fist was an old-fashioned canvas valise. He had forgotten he held it, for this tall, blue-eyed lad was getting his first look at the seas that for many, many years had been the hearth and home of his splendid ancestors.

On board bells clanged. They vibrated in the eager heart of the boy. Deck-hands quit their work and ate their lunches. The boy had not eaten for hours, but still he stood watching the boat. A man came down the gang-plank. On his head a blue cap.

"What are you doing here, kid?"

Then, with a closer look at the satchel and the silent boy's face: "Where you going? Hungry?"

"Yes, sir. I'm hungry; and I'm going to Alaska!"

The man in the blue cap laughed. "Kid, that's a man's country! What does a string-bean shaver like you want up there?"

"I don't know, but I'm going!"

Again the man laughed, and there was something of tolerance, of understanding, in his voice as he said, "So that's it, eh? Well, come on board. I'll get you something to eat, anyway."

And as he went aboard there slipped behind the boy the flea-bitten mongrel cur that some time back had thrust its cold, wet, supplicating nose into the boy's free hand.

"Hi! Get out, you!" The blue capped man gave the dog a kick and a shove.

"Aw, mister, he's hungry too! I won't let him bother." The dog was the boy's first friend in a strange land.

Four days later the *Cottage City* warped into the dock at Juneau. The second officer, he of the blue cap, slapped the boy on the back.

"Well, kid, you've earned your passage. We're square and this is as good a place for you to get a job as anywhere in the country."

That's how I got to Juneau. There were about eight hundred people in it then. It was a big town of one long straggly street, lined with frame buildings and bordered by a plank sidewalk. Saloons, gambling and dance halls; blazing lights, men and women like moths about the lights; it was just before Christmas.

Women! It was my first introduction to that kind! You know why they get a boy? Because they're always ready for a laugh, a friendly laugh! They were all dolled up, too; Paris gowns, you bet! They looked like fairy princesses to me. I'd never been that near to ball dresses before!

Life began to look good; I remember yet how my fool heart pounded against my ribs. Gosh . . . well, anyway I had to get work of course.

Christmas Eve I was feeling just a little sorry for myself. Then I got interested in something you read about in books but don't often see. Just a dirty, old bum he looked, but say, talk about being an honest to goodness Santa Claus! He'd go around to all the stores and ask what they'd take for the Christmas toys they had left over. Sometimes they took, what seemed to me, a small fortune, but it didn't make any difference to this good old man. He bought them all, and paid the price. Then the poor kids of Juneau had a time, for Christmas morning there wasn't one of them that didn't have a present from Santa Claus, and maybe two!

I was willing to do anything to stay in Alaska. I saw a bunch of men laughing as they read a big painted sign: "Wanted—Packer, with a weak head and a strong back."

One of the men pushed another toward the sign: "Go on Jim. That's you!"

"Hell, I ain't no Siwash!"

When the men had scattered, I took a good look at the sign and decided I could fill the bill. I didn't know

that it wasn't considered a white man's job. I was tickled pink because some one else hadn't grabbed it first. Another thing I didn't know was that the job was so gol-darned tough all the Siwashes had quit!

They gave me the job quick, afraid I'd change my mind, and they were so glad to get me they staked me to rubber packs, mackinaw, the right kind of pants and coat, a fur cap, heavy underwear and mittens. I thought they were great to do it.

"Up the beach to the bar, nine miles above Juneau, ask Tom Knutsen, a rancher, where the McGinnis Creek mines are." These were my directions.

Knutsen was a Norwegian. He said, "I tal you kid, dis iss no yob for you!"

I persisted and he directed me on. "You bane go front of dat ice glacier, dat's Mendenhall Glacier, bout half-mile odder side, dar you find cabin, trail lead from cabin 'bout four mile to McGinnis mine."

I hadn't been eating any too much for some time and that kind of mushing just works the belly off a guy. But I got there, to have the superintendent give me one look and refuse me the job. I stuck around insisting I'd make good. To get rid of me, I guess, he let me try it. He told me what I was to do. Once a week mush (walk, you know—not ride) to Juneau and back with the mail; a round trip of thirty-eight miles, and the other days make two trips each day with supplies from Barney cabin to the mine.

And this stuff I had to pack on my back. Forty or fifty pounds doesn't sound like so much, does it? But

you try packing it uphill for a few miles. The funniest thing I ever saw in Alaska happened when I was on this packing job. An Englishman! After I got to know him he wasn't a bad sort of a guy; but say, when he hit Juneau he looked like he'd stepped off the comic opera stage. He was sweet on the mine owner's daughter, and McGinnis sent me down to bring him in.

I took one look at him, and then started counting his luggage. He had more satchels and bags and trunks than a prima donna, and he was wearing a checkered suit, with golf pants, checkered golf socks to match, and a bit of glass stuck in one eye. Oh, he was sweet! I'll bet if a malemute dog had come along just then he'd have fixed those beautiful pants for him! Anyway, he and I and the luggage all stood staring at each other. Then he says, "And where is the donkey?"

"Donkey?"

"Bah jove, yes, the donkey, the jackass; in my country when we think of packers, we think of donkeys, don't you know."

"Well, you're looking at one right now," I said.

He stuck his glass in his eye and took a good squint at me, and then he exclaimed seriously, "Bah Jove!"

Again we stood looking at each other. To say the silence was uncomfortable is putting it mildly. The longer I looked at that luggage and that ridiculous outfit, the madder I got. People like that hadn't ought to be let loose in strange lands.

"I say, you know, this is a lovely country! Does the sun ever shine?"

"I can't haul all this stuff!" I snapped.

He turned around and looked at his luggage as if he had never seen it before, and then back at me.

"Oh, I say, you know, they told me there were jackasses here."

"There are! I just told you I was one of them, but it would take a couple of mules and wagon to haul all that. And that's something we ain't got! You'd better pick out the things you just can't get along without, and I'll see what I can do."

"Oh, I say, old chap, surely the packers can take it," he protested.

"I'm the packer, and there's only one of me, and I can't haul all that junk."

I'll say he was a good sport. He cut down his stuff to a minimum. That done he picked up his golf bag.

"I say, old chap, we can at least have a bit of golf before we start, eh, what?"

"Sure." I had never swung a club in my life, and I hadn't the remotest idea where we were going to swing them, but for the next half-hour, while the stuff for the mine was being brought up from the boat, we batted the little balls around and around the Barney cabin. It was my first golf, and I'm ready to take bets it was the first ever played in Alaska.

I stayed with that packing job until the break up in the spring. Then they started the big hydraulics in the sluices, and McGinnis rounded up a half-dozen Siwashes to do the packing.

There were two big six-inch hydraulics at the mine.

McGinnis said, "Kid, you ain't a bad sort. Want to go on one of them giants?"

"Sure," I said.

"Now listen," McGinnis said to me when we stood beside one of those long nozzles, "Don't let her swing too far. If you do, all hell'll pop. If she ever gets away from you drop, and drop quick. But see that she don't get away!"

I agreed to see that she didn't get away from me, and for a time had the kick of my life, swinging that nozzle back and forth, back and forth, playing that six-inch stream of liquid dynamite on the side of the hill.

And then one day I got a little careless, swung the nozzle a bit too far and with a zip, that baby jerked clean out of my hand.

Well, you can bet I "dropped." By that time I had seen something of what water could do, water roaring down the side of a mountain through a flume and packed suddenly into a six-inch nozzle. And as I dropped, there went sizzling past the spot I had been standing in, a stream of water that would have made mince-meat of me.

Have you ever, as a kid watched a lighted pin-wheel go round and round? Well, you get some idea of what I saw as I looked up from the mud where I lay. I heard a bellow off to the side and I knew that McGinnis had also seen that brute on a rampage.

It wasn't long, however. I saw that water tear boulders out of the muck as big as a barn and roll them

along playfully in front of it. Then I saw that stream hit the compressor building and when it had passed, the compressor building had ceased to be, that was all. When the water hit the end of the saw-mill, I began to crawl away from there. By now there was shouting from all over the place. I saw a man running like mad, swinging his fists and cursing, on up the hill toward the head-gates of the flume.

I crawled over the crest of the hill, pausing only long enough to take stock of the damage. The last of the saw-mill, bits of broken boards and splinters, was floating down the muddy stream.

Without another look I dogged it for Juneau. My first job in Alaska was over.

CHAPTER III

A MAN'S COUNTRY TRULY

THE next year in Juneau I would have gone to the devil, only a gambling-hall proprietor kept me from it. A town like Juneau, any town that's run by strong men who like strong liquor, and where money is thrown around like water (from a six-inch hydraulic) is bad for a kid.

Slim Jim Wynn was a famous character then in Alaska, and in the records of the country's history he has continued to be so. He ran a gambling-hall, and for some reason he took a liking to me. Between Slim Jim Wynn and a dance-hall woman there, I walked straight. Sounds funny, doesn't it? But the two of them kept an eye on me. Slim Jim was in his place when I first went in and ordered a drink.

"Whisky," I said, and waited. A voice at my side announced flatly.

"Beer!"

I wheeled around, ready to fight. Kids are like that. There wasn't anybody going to tell me what I was to drink!

"I said whisky, and I'm drinking whisky!" I yelled, bristling all over like a fool pup.

"I said beer for you, kid, and beer she is," was the answer; and then I met those eyes of his, level, hard,

yet back in them somewhere something that brought a sheepish grin to my face.

"Oh, all right," I mumbled, and from then on I drank beer, and beer only, in Wynn's saloon.

He never preached. He knew that would send me straight the other way. But he'd saunter up when I came in and make me treat him to a beer, and then he'd buy me one—and that was all. It was the same with gambling. He let me gamble all right, if the place was quiet. He'd call me over to the roulette table and take his place behind the wheel, then he'd toss me a bunch of chips and say, "Come on now, let's see you beat it."

He'd deal until the last of my chips went back in his box, never saying a word, handling the game just as he did when there were hundreds around the tables. When he had the last chip, he'd rake it in, and say, "The game's always square, kid, but the percentage is all with the dealer. If you want to gamble, get on my side of the table. Let's have some beer."

I can't remember gambling anywhere else. In this queer way he took all the desire out of me. I got over the beer age, yes, and I've consumed my share of liquor, but many times when I have found myself getting to the tight stage those words of Slim Jim Wynn would pop up in my mind's eye, and I'd call a halt. Advice of the right kind sticks.

There were hundreds of women dancing in Slim Jim's during the years I frequented the place. And it was one of those women who later took over Slim Jim's

job, kept me straight, told me her life story, and impressed on me the good sense of going straight.

A lot of people outside think that all the dance-hall girls were bad. That's far from right. Some of them were fine women, and many of them were married. Their husbands brought them to work and called for them. Many of them were professional entertainers from the States. They danced with the patrons, drank with them, got a percentage. Several that I knew later married men who became nationally known. No one in Alaska looked down on a girl because she happened to work in a dance-hall.

Many of the girls were bad, sure; but they were in a class by themselves. It was this bunch that plied the oldest trade in the world, that gave to the Alaskan dance-hall girl her bad name!

Life was primitive there. Men lived close to death, and when they hit town they had but one idea; have a big time and go the limit, for tomorrow maybe they'd be lying cold on the trail. The saloon, the gambling-halls and the women of the Row, as they were called, were an accepted part of the life. It wasn't anything out of the way to see one of the business men of Alaska talking on the street corner to the proprietress of one of the Row houses.

Ne'er-do-wells, crooks, bums, business men, cynics, scapegoats, doctors, lawyers, thieves, ministers, all were in that mad mass of humanity that rushed upon Alaska and over Chilkoot Pass.

All were to be found in and around Juneau. All came

to Juneau to spend their money and to take their pleasure. It was a part of Alaska, and no one stopped to think about it.

I have seen a minister preaching his Bible of a Sunday morning and cursing like a longshoreman on the trails of a Monday!

I have known girls from the Row who did deeds of charity that only the great-hearted are capable of—and “roll” a man to his skin that night.

Life was raw. Men were on the rim of things. Nothing mattered but the undecorated essentials. If a man went into the country all polished up with cute parlor tricks, he just naturally got them scraped off his hide before he got out. If what showed underneath wasn't all right, he soon got unpopular.

Of course there are some exceptions. I know a guy who is there yet,—a minister of the gospel he is, too, and when he goes into an Indian home to christen a baby, he comes out with the best fur in the place.

Oh, sure, the mother gave it to him. Once I asked an Indian mother. She smiled and said in that soft, crooning way they have, “Oh, he come . . . so nice . . . he put his hand on my leetle baby's head; I give him one so leetle fur.”

Maybe that “leetle fur” was worth a thousand dollars. Pretty high price for a christening, eh? I've heard that minister described by the Indians this way: “Oh, him all same Jesus Christ!”

On the other hand I've seen a rough old sour-dough, who hadn't any morals, and didn't want any, who

could and did, curse until your ears rolled up, give his supper and all he had with him, to some unfortunate of the trail; have seen him go out in sixty-below weather to save the life of another musher, and—take pay? Why, he'd be insulted!

I knew a dance-hall girl who went to prison because if she "talked" she'd get a married man in bad. She was thinking of that man's wife and kids, and she didn't know them from Adam's off Ox, either!

Human nature is what it is, anywhere you find it. The only difference in Alaska is, that the land and its dangers strip off the hull, and you can see a critter's insides. There he stands just for what he is, and some of 'em are rotten to the core, and some are good wood straight through.

Then came the year, 1898, that was to make Alaska world famous. The event itself took place in ninety-six, the discovery of gold by Carmack. But the rush itself, which started in ninety-seven, was really not under way until ninety-eight.

History has recorded it as the "great stampede," but in fact, the *big* rush into the Klondike did not reach its height until 1900. Then was it that the greatest number of gold-crazed people the world has ever known, crowded into the Interior.

Of course I had to see the excitement, so I went to Dyea, then the gateway to the Klondike, and stayed during the winter of ninety-eight. I went over Chilkoot Pass many times, packing, getting a kick out of

the things that happened on the trail, watching the thousands of men and women milling like a great herd of stampeded cattle, on the beach, living in unspeakable conditions in the midst of a conglomeration of gear, animals and supplies.

Strange as it must seem, I felt no lust for gold. It was the adventure of the thing that held me, and I could get more excitement out of going back and forth over the Pass, than continuing on into the Klondike. I was in the middle of the big parade. I packed for the gold hunters until I got tired of walking up those long stairs cut in the solid ice, and then I went back to Juneau.

Well, I was working in a mine and the roof fell in on me. That ended my active career for a while, and my mining operations for all time. When I got out of the hospital I just hung around doing odd jobs in Juneau until 1900.

By this time my feet had begun to itch again, for wonderful tales were coming back from those who had reached the Klondike.

For four years I had been on the rim of the country, never in the Interior of Alaska. Juneau, with its rains, and its comparative civilization had begun to pall. I had proved myself against the hardest tasks they set me there. I could pack half my own weight any day and all day. I could mush thirty-five to forty-five miles a day without effort.

I went to Skagway.

It was the largest town-site in Alaska, and it came into being accidentally, and because of a failure. In

the earlier days of the stampede men had tried to get over to the headwaters of the Yukon by way of White Pass, instead of by Chilkoot. They couldn't make it, and ended up back on the beach again. So they started a town, and began to talk of what was later the White Pass and Yukon Railroad.

When I got there the town was in a turmoil of mad excitement. The main street ablaze with lights, groups jostling each other all over the place and talking in loud and eager voices. Gold, of course. Thousands of people massing into Skagway to go to the Klondike. A railroad was in the process of construction. Its tracks were to run down the main street.

The largest saloons were "The Board of Trade" and "The Pack Train." Men and women crowded them to suffocation. Wine flowed much freer than water. The bars were sixty feet long, and five deep with patrons.

People talked of one thing only, the Klondike. And now Dyea, the first stampede town, was dying. Fifteen thousand people left there in one night for Skagway when the first news came that White Pass had been conquered. A ghost town, empty shacks and dance-halls, doors swinging creakingly, small animals scurrying in and about, faint echoes of music and the rise and fall of voices seeming still to haunt it—that pathetic, desolated thing, a deserted human habitation.

Skagway, later, looked much the same, empty buildings gaunt and windowless, dust thick on deserted floors that had vibrated to the click of high-heeled slippers and the rough shoes of the miners.

At last I decided to go into the Klondike.

So much has been written of this period of Alaska's history, that I will not go into lengthy description, just a few highlights, even though I shall never forget that mush over the pass to Lake Bennett.

Hundreds of outfits abandoned on the trails, thousands of people struggling on, a milling mass of men and women and animals, all toiling on and on, climbing, breathless, determined—at little better than a snail's pace up the grade.

Everything that could walk or move along the trail was turned into a beast of burden. Hogs, sheep, dogs, mules, horses, men!

I remember especially the hogs, grunting in protest, their sharp hoofs slipping and sliding. I saw one pig of about two hundred pounds weight—and he was carrying his weight on his back—wallowing through mud to his belly, muck that was churned and fouled, odorous of the excrement of man and beast!

Most of the thrill went out of it for me. I never did enjoy muck and filth. I looked at those weary folks and thought they were fools. I went on, however, because I had started. Half-way down the other side I came to a mudhole. Sitting on the edge of it was a long, lean Missourian. He rocked back and forth, sobbing, the tears running down his withered cheeks.

"What's the trouble, partner?" I asked.

He waved his hand to the mud hole, in which three mules were struggling, weighted down with heavy packs, mired to their bellies.

"When I git back to Missouri," he choked, "an' I tell my ole' woman and them three brats of mine what misery I been through up here, if they don't beller like hell, I'll beat the livin' tar out of 'em."

I wrestled alongside of him over those mules, and we finally got the outfit back on the trail. The Missourian was just one of thousands like him. Men and women, worn to the state of nervous collapse from excitement and labor; I saw more than one crying, and then maybe, later, I'd see them turning back, leaving half their stuff on the trail behind them.

Lots of the men and women who just got up from what they were doing and started out, crazy for gold, without any equipment, dance-hall women wearing their working clothes, got there quicker than the outfits that carried everything the trail demanded.

From Lake Bennett began the long waterway to Dawson. As you go on you come to Miles Canyon and White Horse Rapids. The Canyon is about three-fourths of a mile long, and narrow with perpendicular walls, the water rushing through at a speed of fifteen to twenty miles an hour. The flow is so swift, and the channel so narrow, that the water rises to a peak in mid-stream, with a whirlpool at each side. God help the boat, big or little, that doesn't ride the crest of that wave. If it slides off to one side, or the other, good-by—that's all.

It was in this place that more tragedies happened than will ever be written down. Men who had come through to the canyon at the cost of untold hardships, men who

had staked their all, grimly determined to fight it out, turned back at the sight of that strip of water!

Here there was a continual buying and bartering, those who wanted to go on, buying the outfits of those who wanted to go back; and when the market was dull, hundreds of dollars worth of supplies were left standing by the trail for any one to claim.

Much money was made by men who stopped here and became water pilots. Outlandish sums were charged to take outfits through, and outlandish sums were paid. Later a chap with a lot of horse sense built a tramway and towed boats, supplies and humans, at so much a pound, around the canyon. He never had to go into the Klondike. His gold-mine was right there.

Here's one of the tragedies.

A fine young chap started in with his boat but slipped off the crest. Miraculously, he reached the bank alive. He bought a fresh outfit and made another try. The same thing happened. Three times it happened. Then he stood on the bank and looked down at those treacherous waters. I guess they seemed to be grinning at him.

He doubled his fist, shook it, and his voice rang out: "Damn you! I'll get down you yet!"

Then he stepped to the edge, drew a gun, and shot himself through the head. His body toppled over, was caught in the current and tossed and dashed out of sight. He was never found, but a little cross of birch limbs was placed on the spot where he had cast himself down.

After White Horse Rapids comes Lake LeBarge, and then the swift "Thirty-Mile River" as it was called, a stretch of the waters of the Yukon. What a relief to put it all behind, and land at Hootalinka. Beyond Hootalinka there is "Sixty-Mile" river, and from there clear sailing until you see, unexpectedly, something rising in a huge mass across the river, barring your way. Five Finger Rapids! Five huge masses of rock across the Yukon's path. At first you cannot see any opening between these rocks. It looks as though, if you do not get out, you will be dashed to death against them. Closer, and the current swings you around between two of the masses, shoots you swiftly through Five Finger Rapids, and the barrier is behind you! You pass White River and a little farther down, Stewart River, and from then on the Yukon is the mighty river of its name. Two hundred miles more, and you come to Dawson—Dawson, the metropolis of the Klondike, sprawled out on the sand-bar at the junction of the Klondike and Yukon rivers.

Dawson had forty thousand gold-mad inhabitants in 1900—the men gold miners and the women, in the main, gold diggers! There's a difference, believe me! One, with grimy fists, tears it from the clean gravel of clean creeks; the other with soft, round arms "rolls" hers from the miner! Both were in pay dirt, and both panned fortunes every day!

Dawson, flaming Dawson, never asleep, wild and reckless, spreading back from the sand-bar to the top of the foothills, a dense, crowded mass of tents and shacks and hysterical humans!

Huge "palaces" of sin, lining the main street; gold spilled and mixed into the sawdust of their floors. Swampers who paid for the right to muck out the place and sift that sawdust made good money on the droppings from around the scales!

Lurid, brilliant Dawson! Promising everything, and giving generously in headaches, heartaches and squandered fortunes!

Gold from Eldorado and Hunker, nuggets as big as your fist; men hilarious, excited and reasonless as crazed boys, wanting to buy, and buying, everything they saw.

And the town full of cheaters, working at top speed to rob the miner. I'll explain. All purchases were paid for in gold-dust. It wasn't polite to watch the man who weighed it. So the buyer courteously turned his back, thus showing his confidence in the honesty of the house. Well, it often happened the confidence was misplaced, for on the bottom of the scale-pan, cunningly hidden, was a dime. With each purchase, whether for drink or what not, the miner paid in excess the weight of that dime in gold.

But whisky and more whisky always came first, and then "Louse Town," where the gold-digger plied her trade. A steady stream of men, oozing out of the saloons, across the swinging bridge—a dollar toll to cross—and disappearing into the inviting doors of "Louse Town!"

Just women, but women from all parts of the world; vultures, waiting to gorge themselves on the gold that

had come clean from Alaska's creeks! Here champagne, instead of whisky, and drunken ribald orgies of indulgence, took the place of gambling, and as effectively reduced the heavy "poke" to emptiness.

Strange, wild things happened in Dawson, and the tales have been told and retold, until they have taken on the qualities of folk-lore. There is the Swede who cleaned up three millions on Hunker Creek, and who in one of Dawson's dazzling saloons caught a dance-hall girl in his arms and crushed her against him, shouting, "Your weight in gold!"

But she fought him, and because she refused him the Swede became the butt of rough jests. They made him treat the house, and again and again, they ridiculed him. For a time he took it good-naturedly, but his eyes, red-rimmed, followed every move of the girl as she danced on the rough floor.

Next morning he kicked in the door of her cabin, caught her up in his arms, and carried her, bedclothes and all, to the Canadian Bank. There he sat her on the scales, and said, "Veigh her!"

"Now," when that was done, "giff her her veight in gold!"

She weighed one hundred forty-two pounds, and an ounce of gold at that time was worth seventeen dollars. When the banker had turned the money over to the girl, the Swede walked out. He never looked at her afterward.

I stayed in Dawson some time, mushed out to the various creeks, watched the men working. But I got

sick of the sight of so much gold, so wildly, so foolishly thrown away. I couldn't stomach it any longer, so I hit back for the Coast. At Juneau I got a contract with Jaeger's Laundry, to supply them with wood. All I had to do was to go up into the timber, cut my wood up into four-foot lengths, load it on a scow and convey it to where it could be thrown ashore and hauled to the laundry. One day, working against darkness and a storm, I was throwing off my load, pitching four-foot lengths of green wood about six feet over my head up on the wharf, when I looked up to see a man standing there staring down at me. He wasn't anything in my young life, so I went on working.

"Have you a permit to cut that wood?"

I heaved up a stick. "Permit? Hell no!"

"Well, come up here. I want to talk to you," he ordered.

I hadn't any time to go anywhere to talk to anybody, so I said, "You go politely to—say, can't you see the tide's running out?"

Well, for a time he stood there watching me work. Then he asked, "Who are you cutting that wood for?"

I told him.

"Did Jaeger say anything to you about stumpage?"

"What do you mean, stumpage? Say, fellow, can't you see I'm busy? Git to hell out of here!" I tossed a nice heavy chunk where it would just miss his feet, and nothing to spare.

He dodged it without a word, and came back at me. "Don't you know you can't cut Government wood

without paying for it, and that you've got to get a permit before you do cut it?"

"I thought this was a free country!" I shot back.

"It is, if a man obeys the law. Otherwise it's not so free, son," he said quietly.

"Who are you, anyway?"

"My name's Love. I am the timber agent. It happens to be my business to see that the Government gets stumpage on its wood. Now, are you going to come up here or will I come down and get you?"

"I'll come to your office when I get this load unloaded."

"What's your name?"

"My name's Hansen, and I'll be there at eight o'clock!"

He looked me straight in the eyes a second, then he said, "All right, Hansen," and went away.

I went to Slim Jim's for a drink when I had the scow emptied and told him about it. "Hell," I said, "this is getting to be a fine country! A fellow can't go out and cut a little wood without paying for it! It's getting too civilized for me. I'm going to get out!"

"You're going over to Love's office first," said Slim Jim. "Got any money?"

"Jaeger doesn't pay me till I've cut it all."

"How much you got cut now?"

"Hundred cords."

He reached in the cash register and handed me twenty-five dollars. "There you are, Hansen. Now you go see Love!"

"Damned if I will! Stumpage!"

"Oh yes, you're going, Hansen. If Love expects you at eight o'clock, you be there! He's a fine fellow. Square as they make 'em. He's attending to his job, that's all! And he'll do it, don't forget it! You be there at eight sharp!"

At eight o'clock I slapped the twenty-five dollars down on the desk in front of the timber agent.

"There's your stumpage!" I said.

He looked at the money, then at me.

"Put that twenty-five dollars back in your pocket. You worked in good faith for it. Jaeger didn't tell you about stumpage, and I suppose you didn't allow for it in your contract. He should have paid it then. I'll see that he does."

Slim Jim was right. Love was a fine fellow, but just the same the thing got under my collar. I decided to leave, and I spent the night buying good-by drinks for the gang.

Next morning, without a cent, I went down to the wharf determined to bum a ride on a boat heading for some other part of the country where things were not so civilized.

CHAPTER IV

I'M A BUM

By the way, did I ever tell you about O'Toole? You'd think men couldn't hobo it in Alaska. But they can! O'Toole and I tried it. Then there's the Whistling Kid. Known all over the country. Has whistled his way into every road-house in the Interior. If he ever did a day's work I never heard of it. Oh yes, you can be a bum in my country. But at that, I think O'Toole and I did more damage in the little time we were at it than all of the rest put together.

I was sick and tired of Juneau. I was still young enough to long for adventure. A job, even though it meant regular meals and a bed at night, was hateful to me if it kept me housed in. I thirsted for the carefree life of the road. I got it. Plenty of it!

Rebellious of established order, as represented by such things as timber agents, irresponsible, heedless of the future, I set out. I had no money, and Juneau was a poor town to be busted in. Gangs of men were leaving to work on the now well-known railroad from Cordova to Chitina. I decided to be a railroader.

Not that I intended to stick with railroading, but it was the kind of a job a man could work a day at, get enough for a meal and lay down his pick when he wanted to leave. I went down to the wharf and inter-

viewed an old pal of mine, the purser of the *Bertha*. We had had more than one drink together, and for the sake of old times he took me on. At that I think he was a bit amazed at my calmly proposing that he give me a free ride to Cordova. I remembered he looked at me with a funny grin and said:

"You've sure got your nerve with you! But I'll take you aboard. You'll be just the right kind of a guy for O'Toole!"

"O'Toole? Who's he?"

"He's the same kind of a guy you are, except you're an amateur and he's an artist! He came on board at Seattle with a sixteen dollar ticket, second class fare. He's now riding up with the first-class passengers, and sleeping in one of our de luxe cabins! You two'll make a fine team."

O'Toole was not hard to find. The promenade-deck was the place for him, and there we found him. Without doubt he was the most untidy person I had ever seen. Every article of his clothing seemed to hang askew, and was luminous in many spots with the grease of bygone meals. His philosophy about clothes was that you couldn't wear more than one shirt at a time, so why own two?

And yet there was a jauntiness about him, an utter obliviousness to the curious, and many times plainly contemptuous, glances cast at him. A roguish spirit of devil-may-care danced in his bright, blue eyes, and his red Irish hair stood up as if in bristling defiance of the consequences of his acts. Something in me leaped up in

understanding. The purser was right, as far as I was concerned, anyway, for already I liked this guy!

"O'Toole," said the purser, "I've found a swell partner for you. Shake hands with Mr. Hansen, Bert Hansen."

For a moment the bright blue gaze played upon me, and then O'Toole removed his hat and made me a bow.

"A partner is it? Glory be to God, and I niver needed one worse. Amin to that, says I!"

Reverently he replaced the battered head-covering. We talked, as men of such type will; we got down to stark facts immediately. He was broke. I was broke. We had to work to eat. We hated work, but work we must. Where was the easiest job, the best pay for the least effort? We discussed many schemes, but would always come back to the railroad.

"Well, the railroad it is thin, me bye, along with the bohunks and the micks."

"If the feed's good enough," I put in.

"Sure, you're a bye afther me own heart!" roared O'Toole, and whacked me resoundingly on the back. He turned to the purser, who had been standing by all this time.

"Run along with ye, yer duties are callin' ye! Sure, we're filled with gratitude to ye for bringin' two prospective capitalists together. Leave us alone while we hold a budget meetin', an' plan our campaign. Later we'll be glad to escort ye over our railroad, whin we get it completed!"

When we were alone, O'Toole leaned forward be-

seechingly. "And ye haven't got a red?" he whispered cautiously.

"Not a bean!"

He stuck his hands in his pockets and gazed off at sea. He put on an expression I was to see often in later days. One eyebrow raised whimsically, mouth pursed up ready for a whistle which would finally come, while he teetered back and forth on his elephantine legs. Finally he heaved a great sigh.

"Well, I'm thinkin' we'd better lay up a good supply of food whilst we're aboard. 'Tis mighty good grub they serve, and ye'd best put down as much as ye can hold."

"We'll sure have to get work straight off, or it's the last we'll have a chance to put down!" I said.

"Wurrk! There's a word I don't like!"

"Maybe you've got some way to beat it?"

"A dozen of thim, me lad. A dozen! But maybe we'll have to wurrk a wee bit first, whilst I'm plannin' a campaign. My idea is that we'll be contractors! We'll hire other min to wurrk for us, me bye, and that's what we'll do! We'll get along grand together, and make us a fortune! Sure, 'tis a great sum of money a man can make on a new railroad if he uses his wits. Yes, me bye, we'll be contractors!"

"Contractors!" I exclaimed. "What kind of contractors?"

"Any kind at all, at all!" said O'Toole, grinning broadly.

"But I don't see—"

"Sure and ye don't, but I'll make it all plain to ye. Anyways you're to be the manager, for ye know the country, and I'm new to it. I'll throw in me two hundred pounds of beef, which same is the only kind of pounds I possess just now; and I'll get us out of a hole if we fall into one. Whin we first land in Cordova, we'll go take a look at the bulletin boards and see what kind of wurrk is wanted. Then ye'll go and arrange it for the two of us!"

"Oh, I will, will I?"

"Sure ye will!" he returned, overlooking my ill humor completely and grinning broadly. He put out his great paw and seized my hand. Well, I'd always thought I had a pretty good grip, but it wasn't anything to that grizzly's! It made me feel better, too, for I figured then (not knowing O'Toole very well, you see) that a man with muscle like that could sure hold up his end of the job. I was glad of the companionship too.

I had not then learned that the man with faith in himself travels alone when he can!

Mud, and curses! Animals, muck and men!

Dogs, mules, baggage, haste, confusion! That was Cordova when the railroad was building. Thousands of foreigners yammering their various lingoos, slopping through mud, splashing themselves and every one else; drivers yowling and cursing, everything and everybody seemingly possessed to get somewhere else from the spot occupied!

“And pwhat a beautiful town we picked to set up in!” remarked O’Toole as we squeezed our way through the jam. Suddenly he gripped my arm.

“Read that! ’Tis better than railroadin’!”

“Wanted: Carpenters,” read the sign to which he pointed.

“But we’re not carpenters. That’s a trade!” I protested.

“D’ye know a saw from a hammer?”

“Certainly, but—”

“Thin we’re carpenters. You’re the business manager. Go get us the jobs!”

Well, the white collar guy couldn’t any more than kick us out of there, I figured, so I went and applied for the both of us. He eyed me rather suspiciously, and said, “Where’s your tools?”

I must have caught more than I realized of O’Toole’s philosophy, for I came back, quick as a wink, “Sure, they’re on the boat.”

“Go get them and take the next train going out to the grade. Get off at Camp Seven and report to the foreman. Here’s your employment slips. Wages seven dollars a day. Hospital fees and commissary deducted.”

He turned to the next in line. O’Toole pulled me to one side.

“Sure now, where are we goin’ to get thim tools?”

“I think there’s a guy here I used to know in Juneau. Joe Diggs. He runs a store—”

“Glory be to God! Hop over to his store immedjit; tell him you’re the business manager for the firm of

O'Toole and Hansen, and get him to let ye have thim tools on tick!"

The upshot was that we left Cordova within the hour, each armed with a saw, hammer, square and carpenter's pencil, from Joe Diggs' store.

Men trusted each other in those days quicker than now, and men paid up quicker too.

On the way out, O'Toole leaned down and picked up the square. Turning it curiously, he said, "Now phwat d'ye suppose they put all thim funny little marks on this thing for?"

Not knowing, I did not answer, and right then I had a hunch that carpentering was not going to be so profitable for the firm of O'Toole and Hansen! At Camp Seven they were starting two big warehouses, and we were put to work on them. The floor was made of two by twelve inch planking that had just been laid.

"Line up those planks and saw them off," said the foreman to me. He took O'Toole somewhere else, and left me to my work. Not knowing what lining up meant, I simply ignored it. Taking my little fine tooth saw, I got down on my knees at the edge of the floor and proceeded to saw off planks. That is, I proceeded to saw off one, for I never got any farther.

"What the hell do you think you're doing?"

Not knowing exactly myself, I didn't answer.

"Say, when and where in hell did you become a carpenter? Didn't I tell you to line 'em up? Go get yourself the right kind of a tool—a cross-cut saw, you damned fool!"

Well, I couldn't deny I was just that, so again I kept still.

"Answer me! Do you know how to line up?"

Well, I had to meet his eyes, and I guess I put on a silly sort of grin, because he said, "Here, I'll show you. Get that chalk line over there. Now drive a nail in the end of that two by twelve and line it up with the outside. Chalk that line . . . now grab it in the middle and snap it!"

A nice white line along the planks was the result.

"That's lining up. Don't forget it!"

I never have.

Well, after some one had told me where I could find a cross-cut, and somebody else had showed me what a cross-cut was, I got ahead real well. Meantime O'Toole was having his troubles. I found out later that every time the foreman went to the basement to watch O'Toole progress, he found my partner resting himself on an eight by eight. After four such discoveries the foreman lost patience.

"Do you expect that lumber to move itself, you big hunk of cheese?" he yelled.

Nothing daunted, O'Toole had replied,

"To be sure, I'm not certain. I'm thinkin' about it, and waitin' to see what'll happen!"

"Well, you needn't wait any longer, for it's going to happen right now! You're fired!"

That foreman said a lot of other things the ladies wouldn't like to hear. He must have been a dog musher in his past. O'Toole got his time and came over to me.

"Shall I wait for ye?" he asked.

"Why?" I said, all innocence.

"I'm thinkin' he's just waitin' for ye to get the last o' thim planks cut."

Which was the truth. Again we were out of jobs. This time in debt to the tune of sixteen dollars for tools. Back in Cordova, O'Toole said, "Well, me bye, let's don't be downhearted. We'll find something more suitable to our talents."

Soon we came upon a sign reading, "Wanted. Some one to remove the rock from this lot."

It was next to the Cordova Hotel, not then completed.

"Sure, now that's what I mean by a contract job," exclaimed O'Toole, slapping me on the back. "You're the manager. You go get it!"

"D'you know anything about taking out rock, O'Toole?"

"Sure, ain't I a good carpenter?"

Well, I wouldn't have taken a chance on it, only I had worked some in the mines, and I figured that with the little I knew about rock, and O'Toole's beef, we might be able to move it. We hunted up the owner and got the contract. Somehow we never had any trouble *getting* jobs.

I went back to my old friend Joe Diggs, and we got a tent to live in, proper tools, grub, a stove, and so on. I'll say Joe had a lot of faith in our firm. We made camp on one end of the lot, and then we stopped work to celebrate; we had our first square meal since

leaving the boat. For several days we got along fine, using pick and shovels and wheelbarrows. Then we struck a face of rock about four feet high at the side nearest the hotel building. This required the drilling of holes, and powder.

"Sure, we can blow her open, all right!" says O'Toole, but I took a look at the new building and decided we'd better call in expert help. O'Toole didn't want to spend the money, but I sat on him.

"If you think I'm going to take a chance on blowing in the side of that hotel, you're crazy, that's all! I'm the manager, and this job's going to be run the way I say!"

"All right, me lad, all right!" agreed O'Toole, immediately. So we went out and looked for a powder man. We got a Swede and he took just one look at the holes O'Toole and I had started, running from a foot wide at the opening to the size of the bit at the bottom, and about eighteen inches deep.

"Dem holes bane no goot! Aye tank Aye make dem holes maybe three feet!"

It was six o'clock, dinner hour, when we finally had the holes ready and the Swede loaded them. The new Cordova had just thrown its dining-room open, and it was jammed.

"Aye tank dat fix 'em," said the Swede, and lit the fuses. All four shots went off. So did the whole side of the hotel! The guests screamed, and pushed the tables and chairs over as they tried to get out to see what was going on. O'Toole immediately clapped on his hat and

started down the street whistling, leaving me and the Swede frozen to the ground. The woman who ran the hotel came rushing out, waving her arms and hollering.

"You crazy fools!" she yelled. "I knew when I first set eyes on you two you didn't have a lick of sense! I'll bet you never saw a rock before!"

And a lot more, this being the mildest of her remarks. It was what you'd call nowadays a hectic moment. But I felt it was nothing to what would happen when the owner, Mr. Heeney, found out. When I could escape I went after O'Toole and found him, as I had expected, trying to drown his troubles in one of the saloons.

"Did ye count the casualties?" he breathed hoarsely.

"Nobody hurt."

He solemnly removed his hat. "Thank God for that!" Then, "Get a good stiff drink in ye, me bye, 'twill warrm ye'r belly and quiet ye'r nerves."

After a few minutes we felt better and then O'Toole grinned at me and said, "Say, did the auld girl have much to say on the subject?"

"She said plenty! But it isn't a patch to what Mr. Heeney'll say."

"Glory be to God, I'd forgotten him. Let's have anither drink."

Which we did. Then I said, "O'Toole, something's got to be done."

"Well, ain't we both carpenters? We'll fix it!"

We had another drink.

"O'Toole," said I, "we've got to go and see Heeney!"

"You're right, me bye. Ye've got to see him, or he'll be afther seeing ye first."

"I said, *we've* got to see him."

"Sure, and I said, ye've got to see him! Ain't ye the manager?"

The news had hit the saloon by this time and the bartender wanted to know if he couldn't buy a couple of miners the drinks. We had the drinks and went back to the tent where I cleaned up and then started out to find Mr. Heeney. I went around back of the hotel thinking I'd sneak in, and locate Mr. Heeney without seeing Mrs. Bland, the manager; but of course I bumped right into her in the back hall.

"Why bother to use the door? Why didn't you walk right in the hole you made?"

"Oh, don't let it worry you. We'll fix it all right. I want to see Mr. Heeney."

"He's in the bar-room."

Up to that moment I don't remember ever having hesitated about opening a bar-room door, but this time it was different. I was standing there sort of peeking in, when some well-meaning fellow hooked his arm through mine and dragged me in. Nothing to it, but to brace Mr. Heeney, which I did. And what do you think he said?

"Don't worry, boy. I've already sent for men from Number Seven. It will be all fixed by to-morrow night."

I was pretty near floored by a rush of gratitude.

"Say, that's great. It sure relieves my mind, and if you'll tell me what it costs we'll make out to pay you somehow."

"That's all right, son. There's been better buildings than this knocked down! Come have a drink."

Can you believe it? On top of that he gave me champagne! When I told O'Toole he thought maybe he'd be the manager from then on, but I refused to resign. The Swede had his pay coming to him but we never located him!

Of course we didn't make much out of our rock contract, as we didn't have the nerve to ask pay for what we'd done; so we owed Joe Diggs considerable of a bill. Joe had some work he wanted done, and probably thought the only way he'd get paid was to let us work it out, which we did.

And the strange part of it was that nothing serious happened.

Now we were pretty well fixed. We had paid up for our stuff, and were outfitted. We put out a sign. Then O'Toole sat down and waited for callers. Soon a man named Shorthill came in.

"Can you fellows cut some cord-wood for me?"

"Sure we can," said O'Toole.

"How do you want to work, by the day or by the cord?"

"By the day," said O'Toole, and to me later, "We'll be sure of that much, anyhow."

"How much can you cut in a day?" asked Shorthill.

“’Tis problematical,” answered O’Toole, and I spoke up quickly:

“Depends on a lot of things, where your timber is, how it falls, and all.” I guess that sounded like we knew our business, so he engaged us, after taking us to the door and pointing up at the side of the hill directly above the town. We were to cut for five dollars a day each, and Shorthill made it plain he expected at least two and a half cords a day. Well, we had to go back to Joe Diggs, for our tools did not include the right kind of saws, or axes. When we got to the timber O’Toole put his tools down by a tree and proceeded to stroll around. That kind of got on my nerves, especially when he started tapping the trunks.

“What the hell are you looking for?”

“The biggest, softest tree I can find. The softer they are, the easier they come down,” said O’Toole. Presently he called to me: “Come up here and bring thim tools!”

He’d located the biggest tree in that timber! A hemlock. It would have made splendid lumber. We argued about this, but finally O’Toole won.

“Sure, can’t ye see the sinse of it? We’ll get this one down, and we’ll have wurrk for all summer off it!”

Well, O’Toole sat on the ground and told me how far in the ax was going. Once I stopped to say, “O’Toole, Shorthill won’t thank us for this. It’s the best tree up here.”

“Sure an’ we don’t want him to thank us. We want him to pay us. Go on, ye’re doin’ fine!”

By night we had the tree ready to fall. O'Toole was jubilant. "Stand off, me bye, she's comin'!" he yelled, and we both scrambled out of the way.

With a crash that shook the earth, tearing down smaller trees with it, that sucker fell, and then, butt first, like all hell let loose, that gigantic battering ram started for the town of Cordova. We watched it, spell-bound, knowing there was nothing we could do, waiting, horror-stricken, for the sound of its impact upon the buildings below. For the first and only time I saw the sweat of fear pop out on O'Toole's usually placid brow.

Just as it was about to crash over the side of the steep hill below which Cordova sat peacefully in the twilight, the tree, braked by its own huge limbs, came to a full stop. O'Toole let out a breath, removed his hat and held it on high.

"Sure, God, ye must have had ye'r arms around it," he intoned reverently.

Shorthill came up the next day to see how we had progressed and promptly paid us off. We had made fifteen dollars between us, and we owed for thirty dollars' worth of tools.

Two days later a freighter came in. Driven by the necessity of eating, O'Toole and I went after a long-shoring job. Thinking it over, it came to me that I was wasting my time. Instead of having a great adventure I was merely hoboing. I decided that O'Toole was lazy and without ambition. We were bums. That's what we were, bums! When O'Toole came barging in,

all excitement over a new job calking boats, I wasn't very enthusiastic.

"Now, O'Toole. I don't know a damned thing about calking a boat. Anyway I'm fed up on this way of doing!"

"Now, me bye, don't go gettin' the blues. We just ain't hit our stride yit, that's all."

But I told O'Toole I was going after something I knew how to do, and do right. He could come or not, as he liked. Otherwise we'd dissolve partnership. Strangely enough we both got something we could do, and since sitting was what O'Toole did very well, that's the kind of a job he got. Court was about to convene in Valdez, so he said he'd go there and get a job on the jury—and he did!

I saw O'Toole again at Valdez, and once again, a long time afterward, when I was in the U. S. Marshal's office at Fairbanks. One day when I was sitting at my desk, in he walked. He looked as seedy as ever, but the same devil-may-care, captivating, twinkle danced in his blue eyes.

"Well, well," he greeted me, "how one does get up in the world. An' how did ye manage it? D'ye suppose they do be needin' anither marshal?"

I did get him on the force, and the Marshal sent him out to one of the localities where we had been having trouble. O'Toole's diplomacy straightened things out and he became well liked by all the people in the district. The last I heard of him, he had found a job where he could use his wit, his diplomacy, and have

a certain amount of time to sit down while at work. He became Attorney General for Alaska, I was told; and certainly he was clever enough to pull a job like that, so it wouldn't surprise me in the least if it were true.

CHAPTER V

THE SCURRY SURVEY PARTY

I GOT me a job on the grade and for about a week I worked amongst a bunch of foreigners in muck up to my waist, swinging a mattock, help'g to clear brush from the right of way. And rain! Man it sure can rain in that Copper River country! I was wet to the hide all day long and getting mighty sick of my job, when one morning Mr. Murcheson, the superintendent of construction, rode up to where I was working.

"Your name Hansen?"

I said it was.

"You're an Alaskan, aren't you?"

"I came into the country in ninety-six," I said.

"Do you know the Copper River country above Abercrombie Canyon?" he asked.

"Some," I said.

"All right. You go in and report to the timekeeper. He'll put you in touch with another Alaskan named Danielson. You two are to take a party and a couple of boats up the Copper until you contact Engineer Scurry's party, and come back out with them. Better go in now."

I could tell you enough about that trip to make a book. But a lot of it wouldn't be interesting to any

one who had not been through something of that kind. So I'll cover it as briefly as I can.

Danielson was a little chap weighing about a hundred thirty pounds, but an old-timer in that section, a man who knew the Copper River, and an expert with poling-boats. Now the Copper River is no river to fool with. There is only one way of going up her. You walk along the banks, or you tow your boats. In this case we had two twenty-foot poling boats to take up which were to be used by Mr. Scurry's outfit in coming back down the river.

For motive power we were given twenty youngsters just out of the University of California. To them the whole thing was a lark, and not to be taken seriously.

Danielson and I had been told the importance of getting to Mr. Scurry in time for his party to make it back before winter set in. Under ordinary conditions I still think this would have been possible. But Alaska is no place for people to fool along the way. Tragedy waits around the corner for the man who thinks he can joke with that country! Danielson divided our crew into two parties, ten to each tow-line, and he and I each took a boat, to steer and pole.

Had those boys taken the thing seriously we might have made it. But as it was, in spite of all we could do, we were just about double the time that we should have been.

And at night, around our camp-fires, Danielson and I talked of the weather as old timers will, chalking up our chances. There was the feel in the air of an early

winter; we had a hunch we were due for a quick freeze up. We did our best to speed things up, but to little avail. And anyway, let me tell you the Copper is not a river you can hurry through. Swift as all outdoors, treacherous as the devil, and about as wicked a stream as one would want to meet.

Abercrombie Canyon and the rapids are something you look back at, once you are through them, with a sigh of relief. Miles Canyon of the Yukon is a paradise beside Abercrombie Rapids! I've been through both and I know! There has been many a good man lost his life in that bit of white water.

Then there are the glaciers. Two of the largest glaciers in the world are on the Copper. Childs and Miles glaciers. Childs is the first one you come to as you pole up the stream. Immense, menacing, it hangs over the river, a solid wall of ice, miles long and hundreds of feet high. With the sun shining on its face, it glistens with all the colors of the rainbow. Crawling, pushing slowly out over the river, as it probably has been crawling and pushing for centuries, it is, like all glaciers, a death dealer, a continual threatener of human life.

And like lots of deadly things, it's a beauty. Just imagine millions of sparkling jewels, set in a wall of white glistening purity, jewels that reflect back to you all the colors of the rainbow. Three hundred feet of Mexican fire-opals, of diamonds, of emeralds, rubies and sapphires, all glowing and gleaming and blazing there in front of you as far as the eye can see. Well, it

just fills you with awe! A man gets a feeling that he cannot describe, of the immensity of the power that must run the whole show.

And, as we swung slowly up the river toward the glacier—it was as if it had just been waiting for us—there came a cracking noise like the firing of a huge cannon, and then the whole face of the glacier seemed to swing outward; to plunge with a mighty roar into the river below.

Right then we were busy. Toward us, at race-horse speed, came a tidal wave over twenty feet high. Danielson let out a shout to the gang to drop the lines, a warning he did not have to repeat. The boys scampered like mad up the banks to safety.

For a few moments Danielson and I had all we could do to save our skins.

"Whew," said one of the gang, as we sat around taking a breathing spell, "I'm glad we're past that son of a gun."

"Save your rejoicing," said Danielson, "until we get past the next one."

"Is there another one?"

"There sure is. Mebbe you fellows will get the idea pretty soon this ain't no picnic party!"

Miles Glacier came next, but it was kind to us that day, for it waited until we were out of range before it dumped thousands of tons of ice into the bay through which we had just passed.

After Miles Glacier comes Abercrombie Canyon and the rapids. Here we doubled our crews and took one

boat through at a time. But there is another menace along the Copper River that has caught many of the unknowing or the unwary. Where some of the streams empty into the river there is what is known as a shifting gravel bottom. Apparently it is solid footing, but the moment any weight is put on it, it shifts and drops you into what seems to be a bottomless hole.

We ran into such a condition where Beaver Creek enters the Copper and it was only because of the superb boatmanship of Danielson that we managed to keep five of our gang from drowning. We had to work on one lad for more than an hour before we could get the water out of him. When at last we reached Engineer Scurry's Camp, all of us were set to work on the survey, which had to be completed before we could abandon camp and hit down the river.

Mr. Scurry was evidently much relieved. He had expected us days before. Danielson explained why we had not been able to make better time, but at that I thought he was pretty lenient with the kids, much more so than I would have been.

But that delay—seemingly inconsequential—and what came of it, brought home to me one of Alaska's unwritten and unbreakable laws: She will give you one chance. If you don't take it, you're through! She demands your ultimate best. If you shirk, you pay!

And unbeknown to us, although as I say, Danielson and I felt it of a night when all was quiet, Alaska was getting ready to play her grim jest with our little outfit that had dared to challenge her!

Well, it was one of the kids that finally licked us. As I said, there was a lot of work yet to be done, and we all went at it. One of the youngsters, a red-headed lad to whom life was a lark, was given a job as rear flagman. The front man went ahead, set up his rod, the instrument man gave him the sight and he drove a stake. Then another sight was made and on top of the stake he drove a tack, which was the point over which the rear rodman should set his pole for the surveyor to get the back sight.

At the end of the fourth day, we were congratulating ourselves that the work was almost at an end, when the instrument man discovered something wrong. That red-headed kid had been taking the guide-tacks out of the stakes, if they didn't happen to be in the middle, re-setting them nicely in the center! Whew, boy! When that came out!

Well, there was nothing for it but to run the work of those four days over; and in those four days, Alaska struck!

Winter, that early freeze-up that Danielson and I felt in our bones, landed on us without further warning. Gone forever was our chance of making it back down the Copper river with our boats. There we were, no one outfitted for the winter, no heavy clothing, inadequate blankets . . . a summer excursion party frozen in, in a wilderness, days from the nearest shelter!

We did the only thing there was to do. We knocked the boats to pieces and made two sleds, on which we piled the instruments, the records of the survey, and

seven days' food for twenty-eight men; Griggsley, the field man, estimated it would take us that long to mush back over the trail to the first camp on the railroad.

All bedding and all personal effects were ordered cached. Then, to make it worse, the cook, who had been suffering from rheumatism, became helpless and had to be given one of the sleds.

Danielson and I protested against leaving the blankets, but Griggsley ignored us. Despite his orders Danielson and I slung our blankets over our shoulders, and we spent the last night in camp making mittens and socks out of an old suit of underwear; doing what we could to fit ourselves for the trail. But we were a sorry lot. Danielson had on hip boots, I had a pair of high top shoes, with hobnails. But most of the party had nothing but light clothing, light footwear, and now they were to discard their only protection, their blankets!

I am trying to tell you something of what actually happened, though I realize it may not be very interesting reading. But it is history in Alaska, and I feel that in justice to Danielson and myself, I should set down the facts.

We were, I think, the only real Alaskans in the party.

The next morning dawned cold and stormy. Eight men to a sled, we started, as ill assorted and equipped a band of travelers as ever mushed in that relentless country. Give me a dog every time when it comes to pulling. He's twice as efficient as a man; there is no

bucking and halting and jerking. Once he gets the sled in motion it's steady pull, pull—and you get somewhere.

Griggsley set out to break trail. In justice to him I must say that he was unfamiliar with that country. He had come into it via Valdez, I believe, hitting the Copper where the town of Chitina now stands. He knew but little of the land lying between our camp and Abercrombie Canyon, which we must reach.

Danielson and I took our places at the sled immediately following Griggsley. It wasn't long before we were breaking our own trail, in spite of Griggsley's orders. We had but one intention, and that was to get in before we froze! Well, of course that led to our being brought before Mr. Scurry for a dressing down. He listened to both sides and decided that Danielson knew the Copper River country better than Griggsley. So we went ahead, breaking trail as we thought best.

A fire of green alders makes little heat. Having abandoned tents, blankets and all camp equipment that would have meant warmth, our gang sat around the fire that night, unable to sleep, trying to keep from freezing. Mr. Scurry, then over sixty and as fine a man as I ever met, sat beside the fire shivering with the cold. Finally I couldn't stand it any longer, and wrapped my blanket around him in spite of his protests.

The next morning was colder. Danielson and I knew that each day would see it colder still, and as we looked back at those men, we felt that we had all at last come to the long trail.

The suffering was terrible. Frost-bitten hands, feet, noses; and frost bite is like a raw burn. The men staggered on and on, beating their arms about to stir the circulation, stumbling and falling as their feet became numb, getting up and going on—and on. A scarecrow outfit challenging eternity! And eternity hovered over us, embodied in that silent cold which is Alaska's answer to the foolhardy!

Then to make bad worse, Mr. Scurry, who had long worked beyond his strength, had to give up. We made a place for him on the load, and after a consultation decided to cache all the instruments; to lighten the loads of everything not essential to our journey. This we did, but it wasn't until afterward that Danielson and I learned that along with the instruments they had cached most of the grub.

On we went, day after day, each day one long round of hours packed with suffering, the nights but little better, as with stiffened fingers we sat around the fire and kept awake to keep from freezing.

We had been on starvation rations for three days, and as the cold increased and our vitality became lower, due to the lack of heat-giving food, our sufferings increased. The sixth night we had reached an island sixteen miles above Abercrombie Canyon near Baird River.

And there we counted out the last of our beans. I remember there were exactly ten beans to the man! Ten beans to furnish warmth for ten hours of mushing over unbroken trails!

That night, the cook, who had been suffering untold agonies, threw himself at my feet and begged me to kill him.

"For God's sake, Hansen, shoot me . . . anything . . . but put me out of my misery."

"I can't do it, old man . . . I'm sorry," was all I could say.

In a time like this it isn't your mind that stays your hand, for your mind reasons, and with reason comes a hard common sense view of things. No, it's something beyond your reason; the thing that kept me going on the Chandalar Trail, after reason had left and by all rights I should have been dead . . . that something kept me going, as it now kept me from doing for that cook what reason said was the kindest thing to do!

Civilization's a funny thing. I've lived with men in the raw and I've lived where a man used a fork. Looking at both ways, it seems as if they don't stack up! We get cause and effect mixed. Civilized law says it's a crime to kill a man. Sometimes in the wilderness, it's a kindness to a fellow sufferer to forget civilization!

Between midnight and dawn, that hour when you get the feeling of the earth hung in space and your own soul suspended, without anchorage, Mr. Scurry called to me. I went over where he sat, huddled and shivering before our pitiful, inadequate blaze.

"I am afraid, my boy," he said, "that I won't last out the night. Do you suppose you could possibly reach the canyon if you struck out at once, and get help for us all?"

I stared off through the white night toward the distant, somber shadows. "I'll try," I said. That was the best I could promise.

He laid a thin, blue-veined hand on my knee. "There's a cabin at the upper end of Abercrombie Canyon, where a couple of men have been gathering weather data. Do you think you could find it?"

"I can try," I said again.

"I cannot order you to risk your life, lad," he said, "but—"

"I'll find it or I won't come back," I said.

Danielson saw me getting ready and when he found what I was going to try to do he said, "I'm going along. You don't know the country. I do!"

"You're too short-legged," I said. "You'll hold me up!" I might say that I am built something like a crane.

"Damn the legs. I'm goin'!"

I knew it wouldn't do any good to argue with him, so, "Mush!" I snapped.

A wave of our arms and we were off into the night. We could not take turns breaking trail because of Danielson's legs. So I went ahead, in snow of varying depths sometimes to my knees, sometimes to my waist. I have traveled in sixty-below weather many times. But when a man's belly is empty he hasn't anything to travel on. It seemed to us about as cold as weather could get, and the wind whipping down out of the mountains bit into our very bones. We dared not stop, not only for our own sakes, but also because of those fellows

we had left behind. Until noon the next day we mushed, stumbling and getting up and stumbling on again. In that time we had covered exactly ten miles and had reached the old dead moraine at the head of the canyon.

We were now in an area of huge boulders. To climb them was impossible in our weakened condition. So we spent the next hour working our way down to the bank of the river in the hope of finding there a way out of our difficulties.

And there we found it, a sheet of glare-ice, extending from the edge of the moraine some four or five feet out into the rapid current of the river. It was thin, likely to break at any time. Yet it was the only path open to us. And then just as we were about to breathe a sigh of relief we found ourselves up against something that almost licked us.

I have told you that Danielson wore hip boots, rubber boots. The moment his feet struck the ice he landed on the back of his head. I caught him as he started to slide into the river. The few hobnails still sticking in the soles of my shoes bit into the ice and made it possible for me to travel. But try as he would Danielson could not make it. I did not dare leave him there to freeze, but what could I do? At last we hit on an expedient. Danielson lay down on his back on the ice and I hooked a leg under each arm. Down the ice we went, his head bobbing up and down, now and then hitting the ice with a whack that jarred his teeth. Every little while I would slip and fall, and we'd both barely save ourselves from sliding into the black water of the

river, then up I'd get and we'd go on again. But every few yards Danielson would let out a groan. I knew it must be plain hell on him. I knew too that he was all in; knew it long before he did. And I was not much better off. After an unusually hard jounce, he waved a hand weakly and whispered, "Go on, I'm done!"

"You'll die!" I said, flopping to the ice beside him.

"All right! I'll have to die."

"It can't be over three or four miles more," I said. "Can't you stick it out?"

"Not another foot. Go on and leave me here. One of us has got to get through!"

"Hell's fire!" I said. "I can't leave you here." I scrambled to my feet and again grabbed his freezing legs. Off I lurched, determined I'd make it somehow. Hours of agony. The daylight was gone and through the arctic night we staggered on. Danielson was by this time unable to hold up his head from the ice at all, unable to keep the groans from his bloodless lips. I lost all sense of time or distance. To-day I can but remember it as a nightmare, a nightmare of plodding steps, of staggering falls, of weak struggles to get back on my feet. All sense of pain was gone, just a numb pounding of my feet on the ice, and behind me a man sobbing, groaning and cursing.

At last I fell and could not get up. I stayed down, crawling on all fours, still clutching Danielson's knees, still dragging forward. God what a nightmare. Then I'd remember that grand, old man back there at camp, bearing his own pain in silence.

I twisted about and looked at Danielson.

"Go on . . . can't stand any more—"

Well, there it was! If I left him, he'd die. If I tried to drag him with me, we'd both die. And not only would we die, but so would those who waited trusting to us to bring help.

I managed to drag him into the lee side of a boulder and there I left him. Then I went on again, clawing, fighting and dragging my numbed body down the canyon.

Now I don't claim to know anything about evolution. But this I do know. When a man gets to the end of his rope, when he struggles on after his physical strength is gone, he acts more like an animal than a human being. I wouldn't like to listen to a man making the sounds I did. I know I whined. I was no longer a man—just a dumb animal, moving forward by inches and growling and whining deep in my throat.

And they told me, those two men there in the cabin, that that was the first thing they heard, the whining and scratching of an animal at the door of their small cabin.

They were sitting at the table playing cards. In a pause between hands one of them said to the other, "There's a dog out there trying to get in."

"Let him whine!" said the other.

Another round and the first one said, "I'm going to let him in."

He told me afterwards that when he opened the door I rolled inside, as near dead as he'd ever seen a man.

They got me on a bunk, cut off my shoes, what was left of them; my hands were twice their normal size and encased in gloves of frozen blood. I was rolled, pommeeled, poured full of whisky, and all but laid bodily on the stove to thaw out. It was more than an hour before I finally managed to make them understand about Danielson. They immediately set about getting their outfit together and when they were ready it dawned upon me that I would never be able to direct them to where I had cached Danielson.

"Could you guide us to him, then?"

"Sure as shooting!"

So, bundled up in robes, I was put on the sled and off through the black night we went. I don't claim any credit for it, but I have often wondered what it was that enabled me to direct them to the spot where I had left Danielson. Yet that's what I did. And that's exactly why I say, it takes a Northman to survive the North.

Here's this Nobile and his gang, went up there and got themselves in a peck of trouble, lost and the world hunting for them. But Amundsen! The greatest of them all. I know that old Walrus! He could live on a cake of ice as big as a tin plate. I hope he is alive up there somewhere. He was the homeliest man I think I have ever seen. But I have sat at a table with him and listened over a glass of beer and a sandwich as he talked of our country. If he has died on this last rescue mission then the world has lost one of its great souls!

But getting back to Danielson. By all rights he should

have been dead. But he wasn't. We got him back to the cabin around midnight, and once they had him in as good shape as possible, those two men set out with their dogs on the journey to where we had left Engineer Scurry's party.

It was four o'clock the next afternoon when they carried Mr. Scurry and the cook into the cabin. By that time I had recovered sufficiently to help, so I went back with them on the next trip. And along the trail came those that could walk or stagger; all that day and all that night. It was eight o'clock the next morning when the last of them were brought to the cabin. They were in frightful condition; the worst was the young chap who jumped into the river to end his misery.

One of the weather station men mushed down the canyon to Camp Thirteen and telephoned the railroad authorities at Cordova. A train with doctors and nurses, was despatched to the end of the line. Hay-racks filled with hay and blankets were sent to bring the party to where the train was waiting. We were then rushed to Cordova. Not a man of that whole party but was under medical care, some of them helpless invalids for months upon end.

Danielson and I, after we recovered, were offered jobs on the railroad for the winter. But I was a kid at heart and Alaska, the wilds of her, was calling. I did not want a safe berth for the winter, I wanted adventure. I wanted to boast that I had met Alaska toe to toe, fought her round by round in her own corner, and

hadn't been downed. Thus does egotism sometimes serve a larger plan.

As soon as I had fully recovered I left Cordova for Valdez, headed for the Interior. The battle was on!

BOOK

II

THE LAW

"This is the law of the Yukon, that only the strong shall thrive,

That surely the weak shall perish, and only the fit survive!"

ROBERT W. SERVICE—"The Law of The Yukon"

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CHAPTER I

THE RICHARDSON TRAIL

TO-DAY it's a fine automobile highway. But not then. It was only a trail—and what a trail! In 1907 in Alaska, if you didn't own a dog team, or if you didn't have a lot of money, you walked—"mushed."

I was telling that to a youngster once, and he thought I was joking; the world was full of dogs!

I explained that the kind of dogs that could mush the trails and pull a load, cost almost as much money as his little car, and that it was a lot more expensive to keep them than to buy gas. Nor could you find a butcher shop on every corner in Alaska where one might get a handful of bones. Alaskan dogs have to have special food and special care, if you expect to reach your destination alive.

Not having any dogs, and little money, I mushed from Valdez to Fairbanks. I had enough money left after paying my passage on the boat from Cordova to Valdez to have bought a ride on one of the stages that made the trip to Fairbanks, but I was determined to mush it. I wanted to be able to say that I had walked the whole way, four hundred and seventy miles. Now mind you it was winter, and the going was not the easiest in the world!

But let me begin at the beginning. Valdez was the

gateway to the Interior. The only other place where supplies intended for the Interior could be left was at St. Michaels, north of the mouth of the Yukon.

The bulk of everything destined for the Interior Alaska was dumped on the waterfront planks at Valdez—people, freight, mail, dogs, grub, all winter long, which lasted from October until May. Back of the waterfront was the one street which virtually made up the town. Saloons and dance-halls occupied the prominent corners. During the winter the streets were crowded and everybody was in a hurry. In the summer there wasn't anything to hurry for, nothing coming in and nothing going out of the port.

O'Toole had told me he was going to get a job on the jury in Valdez, so no sooner was I dumped on the wharf along with a lot of other junk than I set out on a still hunt for my old partner. And sure enough there he was, living at the best hotel! He had made the jury! How, I don't know to this day! Well, O'Toole paraded me all over the town and permitted me to treat him royally in every saloon we struck. You see the newspapers had carried the account of the Scurry party.

We started in at the Valdez Star.

"Hello, Alaskan, buy a drink," says a golden-haired lady, sliding my arm about her waist.

"Drinks, but that's all, me little lady, no—er—gambling," warned O'Toole. "This is me friend from Cordova, and a good carpenter he is, he is; as well as a fine miner."

O'Toole signaled to the bartender, we all had the

round of drinks, and with a word of farewell to goldie-locks O'Toole and I were gone.

When I told him I was heading for Fairbanks; that I intended to mush in, he immediately asked,

"By any mishap have ye been dropped on yer head of late?"

"Why?"

"'Cause," shaking his head, "I'm thinkin' 'tis only the lack of brains would account for it. Fairbanks! And the lad intinds to walk. An' it bein' the dead o' winter! There's pleasanter ways of committin' suicide."

"Then you don't want to come along?" I said.

"Me bye, 'tis not often the Heavenly Father gives a man the proper settin' for his talents. 'Twould be a sin an' no mistake, for me to go against Him."

So I left him, sitting on the jury.

He did, however, come to the edge of town with me, just for old times sake. It was a great show of affection, and I realized it as such. I can see him yet, standing there looking at me, and shaking his head sorrowfully.

"The fine, long legs ye have, Bert, an' to think ye're goin' to walk off so much av thim! Four hundred miles the bye is walkin' an' all for the privilege of diggin' in the dirt! 'Tis a shame. Ye'd make a fine juryman! Would ye sit if I got ye a place?"

"I would not!" I retorted heartily.

"Then, 'tis part we must, me bye."

As I went around the first bend in the trail he was still watching me, head slowly wagging.

I felt, as I mushed along that someday I was entering an entirely different cycle of my life. I was outfitted for it with exactly one extra silk handkerchief, with which to pat the expected frost-bitten nose, a razor and a brush. Besides this extra baggage, I possessed what I stood up in. A pair of rubber pacs, overalls, a flannel shirt, mackinaw, cap and mittens. I had a hundred dollars in my pocket. That would take a man a long way on the outside where a hot-dog can be bought for a dime! But the cheapest meal a man could get at that time in that part of Alaska cost a dollar and a half and a place to sleep, a bunk in a roadhouse, set you back one dollar. I had never been over this trail—the winter was already on—and believe me, it was no trail to tackle on foot. I soon found that out!

The first day I had lunch with Mrs. Wartman, a kindly matron, plump and happy. She advised me to stay overnight, as Thompson's pass, the first out from the coast, was none too well staked. (Over the summit of the passes tall stakes were placed at intervals so that, in a storm the traveler might be able to keep to the trail.)

It was pitch dark before I reached the pass, so I was glad to see ahead of me a dim light, which turned out to be from the windows of Ptarmigan Drop roadhouse. I had been four hours on a black trail, and I hit the bunk immediately.

The second day I had lunch at Beaver Dam. I had mushed all morning through a narrow, gulch-like, well-timbered section. The trail was good and I was getting

into my stride. That night I reached Earnestínés. I had come out of the hills into the Copper River Valley. The following day I lunched at Willow Creek in the Copper River Valley proper, a wide, level, plateau with mountains off to the eastward that seemed to tower to the heavens. They came into better view the following morning when I left Copper Center, a trading post, hotel and saloon.

Again I reached my stopping place late at night, having traveled on an average about thirty-five miles a day. Twelve to sixteen hours on the trail leaves little inclination to gossip around the fire and I usually hit my bunk immediately after supper.

Now from Copper Center it is a gradual up grade to the summit of the Alaskan Range. The fourth day I reached Gulkana; it was much colder that night. The next morning I could cross the Copper River on the ice, where the trail leaves the river. I was not yet half way to Fairbanks but had begun to count my money. The fifth day I lunched at Sourdough, late in the afternoon. I was half inclined to stay the night, and wished heartily I had before I reached Meyers at ten that night. They gave me a cold lunch and a colder bed. It was then thirty below. I got an early start from Meyers, hoping to reach Yost's Summit that night. Meals along here were two dollars, and my funds were dwindling fast.

When I arrived at Paxton's it was to find stages, private rigs and some dog teams holed up. The trail to Yost, about twenty miles, was blown in. Ignoring

all advice I set out. It was terribly cold, made more so by a draft blowing over the summit out of the north; the drifts were high and I suffered intensely because of inadequate clothing, so I was completely done in when I reached Yost's at eight that night. I remember there was a group of people around the big fire in the living-room when I walked into the road-house. They looked me over, from my head to my feet, trying to size me up—a lone musher coming over a trail on foot when every one else had holed up! They made a place for me by the fire and greeted me as an Alaskan. I felt an outward and an inward warmth, one from the hospitable fire, the other from the thought that I was now in the Interior of Alaska!

True, I was not far in, but I was over the summit, on the Delta River, whose waters finally reach the Yukon. It was on this river, some years later that that picture of the bull moose on his knees was taken. Shall I tell you about it? Well, Bob Semple and I had been out hunting and we had pitched our camp on the banks of a small lake in the Little Delta country. As we sat around the camp that evening we saw a big bull moose swimming toward us across the lake. Have you ever seen a bull moose in the water? He looks like a cross between a railroad locomotive and a battleship. It's a sight you never forget.

"Let's row out toward that old fellow and get some pictures," I said.

Bob took the oars, leaving me in the stern with the camera. We cut across his course and I began snapping

pictures as soon as we got close. In my excitement I failed to pull the camera lens clear out, which is the only reason I ever got this picture of that old fellow on his knees.

We cut across his bow, so to speak, and swung around to get a good side view. Whereat the old fellow reared up out of the water as if he was going to climb right up on the big wave washing ahead of him. Then, instead of going on about his business, he swung directly toward our boat.

"By Golly, he's going to chase us," Bob yelled.

"I'm the closest," I yelled back. "Can't I see he is? Row, you sucker, or he'll spill us!"

In spite of the best we could do, he plowed right for us, and believe me, he was gaining! Facing him from the back of the boat, I could see in his blazing eyes that his intentions were not honorable. There wasn't a second pair of oars, so it was up to Bob.

"Row, damn it," I shouted.

"Row, hell, I'm rowing as hard as I can."

"God. He's gaining!" I shouted, "he's going to spill us!"

"Uh . . . huh. What'll we do now?" gasped Bob, between strokes.

"Shoot him off," I yelled, and grabbed the gun. Well, I threw lead all around that old devil, but still he came on! There wasn't forty feet between him and us, and I knew we were in for it right. I forgot all about my camera. In fact all my love for pictures seemed to fade away.

"He's coming," howled Bob. "God, look at him come!"

"Look, hell. I'm going to plug him!"

I let drive and caught him square. We could hear the bullet thud into him. Another crack and we could see him flinch. Now what! For the gun was empty!

But that last shot had turned Mr. Moose. He was forging toward the gravelly shore about a hundred yards away. He plowed up out of the water and started off over the portage that led to the Little Delta River a mile away. We could hear the timber crash as he went through it, taking everything in his path.

"We've got to go after him," I said to Semple. "He's shot and he'll fall somewhere. We ought to put the old boy out of his misery."

So we rowed to shore, and up the portage we went. His trail was plain to be seen, where he had cut a swath through the brush and timber. As we dropped off the divide and down into the bed of the Little Delta River we found him. About that time he caught our scent and eyes blazing, hackles up, he struggled to his haunches, tried to get his hind legs under him. If he had, well—some one else would have to tell you this story.

"Get in there, Bob," I shouted, "and let me snap a picture of you two."

Bob did. I clicked the camera, and as if it were a signal, over that old boy toppled, dead!

But I must get back to my first mush into Fairbanks. The seventh day saw me still on the Delta River,

passing through the Alaskan Range. That night I stayed at Donnelly's and the next morning I got my first glimpse of the mountains from the north side. The eighth day was a tough mush; the ninth saw me at Washburns, where I struck the Tanana River and well-timbered country—the most beautiful birches I have ever seen. That evening I walked into Munson's road-house, Salchaket, with nine dollars in my pocket. An hour later the stage came in from Valdez and changed my whole career. It's funny how the climaxes of a man's life seem too commonplace at the time even to be recorded in one's memory.

I was in the living-room, legs stretched out, thawing some of the kinks out of them, when the passengers came in. There were six or eight of them, so bundled up in furs that you couldn't tell the men from the women.

A rather heavy-set individual came up to me, gave me a careful looking-over, and thrust out his hand.

"You're the young man I once had some cord-wood dealings with back in Juneau, aren't you?"

It was Love, the timber agent.

"Yes," I said, shaking his hand.

He pulled up a chair beside me.

"Headed for Fairbanks—Hansen, isn't it?"

I nodded. Just then came the call for supper.

"Had your dinner?" he asked.

"Yes," I lied.

"Well, I'll see you in Fairbanks," he said, and went into the dining-room.

Before he had finished his dinner I was asleep in my bunk, and before he was up the next morning I was on my way. I had forty-two miles to mush before I reached Fairbanks. At the eighteen mile road-house, Mother Johnson's place, I had a cup of coffee and a piece of pie. Fifty cents.

At three o'clock that afternoon, the afternoon of December 5th, I walked down Cushman Street in Fairbanks, the last lap of my four hundred and seventy mile mush. I was now in the Interior of Alaska!

At the corner of Front Street, facing the Chena river, was the Horseshoe saloon and opposite it the Fairbanks Buffet. I chose the Fairbanks Buffet. It was a slack hour and no one was at the bar when I entered. I asked for a glass of whisky, invited the bartender to have one. A chap sitting at the head of the bar, looked around, so I asked him to join us as I pitched my last five dollar gold piece on the bar and gathered up three and a half in change. The proprietor, for it turned out to be the proprietor, bought a round and then the bartender.

"Where's a good place to eat?" I asked.

"Go to the Arcade. Where you from?"

"The Coast."

"Is the stage in already?"

"I mushed in," I said.

They seemed to think I had done something to mush from Valdez in the time I had, ten days and a half. We introduced ourselves and I found the proprietor's name to be Thompson, the bartender's Braake.

I left then to get something to eat, but after one look at the Arcade, remembering the price of whisky, I decided it was no place for me!

Farther on I found a restaurant where for two and a half I got a fine feed. Then I went back to the Buffet. I had no place else to go and I wanted some one to talk to. I had to locate a job and that quickly. So I said to Thompson.

"Don't know where I can find a job, do you?"

"Believe I do. If you can fire a boiler and tend pumps. I'll call up Fairbanks Creek, they want a man."

I had never fired a boiler or tended pumps. I felt I was slipping back into the O'Toole-Hansen habits, but I had to have work, so—"Sure, guess I can learn. How much will it cost to phone out there?"

"Four dollars."

"Let's let it wait for a while then," I said, not having the four dollars.

Just then the stage came in, and all of us in the bar, as did every one else along the street, went to the door to watch it drive past. I saw Mr. Love, the one time timber agent and he waved to me.

As we sauntered back, Thompson said,

"Broke?"

"Bent!" I said.

He tossed a twenty dollar gold piece on the bar in front of me.

"Now let's have another drink," I said. "Then I'll phone out about that job."

I learned I could have it. It was thirty-eight miles to the claims, by stage to within fourteen miles, and mush the rest. I thanked Thompson and went out to look over Fairbanks, which was the administrative center for the whole of the Interior.

That evening I was in the Model Restaurant eating when Love slid on to the stool next to me.

"Well, you made it, all okay. What time did you get in?"

"Three o'clock," I answered.

He sized me up, insisted on paying for my meal, and said,

"Come over to my office. I want to talk to you."

We walked to the court-house, down a long corridor, and he finally came to a stop before a door on which was the sign "United States Marshal's Office."

"Now, what the hell have I done, that this bird's after me?" I thought, as he sat down at his desk and gave me a chair opposite.

"I have just recently been appointed United States Marshal for this District," Love began. He showed me his framed appointment, signed by President Roosevelt. I learned later that the marshal had been a Rough Rider.

"Now, Hansen, I have a job for you. It's no easy cushion—steam-heated one either. But I know you can do it. All I ask is that you go straight, treat every one alike and on the square. It's the hardest job in this office. Also the best!"

"Why give it to me? You don't know me!" I said.

"I'd never make an officer. Nope! I've got a job on the creeks. Goin' out in the morning!"

I got up to go.

"Sit down a moment!"

I sat.

"Where are you stopping? Haven't put up any place yet, eh? Well, you go to the Pioneer Hotel, get yourself a room, a good room—have a night's rest and come back here at ten o'clock in the morning. Your papers will be made out and you can be sworn in."

I shook my head. "Not me! I'll not be here! Of course, Mr. Love, I thank you and all that, but I don't want the job."

"You're tired," he said. "You go get a good rest, as I told you. I'll see you in the morning."

He rose, shook hands and went with me to the door. You just know I was thinking some funny things on my way down the street.

Instead of going to the Pioneer Hotel I went to a little one, the Columbia. I had arranged with Thompson to lay over a day before going out to the creeks. The next morning, about nine o'clock, there came a knock at the door of my room. I opened it, and there stood Marshal Love!

"I thought I told you to go to the Pioneer Hotel," was his greeting.

"I didn't say I would."

"That's why I've had to look for you in every hotel in town! Come on, get dressed, and we'll go have breakfast."

Well, what could a fellow do with a guy like that? We went to the Arcade, the place I had passed up, and had a fine breakfast.

"Now we'll get you sworn in as a Deputy Marshal," Love said. "Your commission is made out."

"I've got a job out on the creeks," I insisted.

"That's fine," he returned blandly. "Now, as soon as we get you all fixed up, you can phone them you aren't coming."

Before I knew what to say to that, he had me out of the restaurant and headed for the court-house. Still in a daze I found myself ushered into the Clerk's office and Marshal Love was saying, "Hold up your right hand!"

I did.

Then I was saying, "I will." Mechanically I signed on the dotted line.

"That's that!" Marshal Love said. "Now come into the office and I'll introduce you to the rest of the force."

So, dirty, unshaven, clad in overalls, I followed him into the office. There he introduced me to Chief Office Deputy Percy Charles, Deputy Jack Mathews, Deputy George Wiseman and Deputy Miss Anderson—the stenographer.

In his introduction Marshal Love called me the new trail man. I saw that I made an unfavorable impression—my unkempt appearance, my dirty, trail-worn clothes. The Marshal then led me into his own office, where he handed me a hundred dollars.

"Now, Hansen," he said, "go get a complete new

outfit for the trail and anything else you need. If you need more money, come back."

I went direct to the Buffet, paid Thompson back the twenty, told him I couldn't take the job, but didn't tell him why, bought a drink, and then went out hunting a bath, shave and new raiment. When I returned to the office the greeting of the gang seemed to be rather forced. I got the impression Charles didn't cotton to me much. Once more in Marshal Love's private office, he looked me over, then slapped me on the back.

"Hansen, you look great. I'm tickled pink. Sit down. Do you remember," he said, "on the dock in Juneau when I had that talk with you about stumpage on Jaeger's wood?"

I nodded.

"Well, I liked your style. Your independence! And above all, I liked the fact that when you said you'd be at my office at eight, you were there at eight. Since that time I have been keeping cases on you. When Mr. Roosevelt asked me to take this job, I knew I had a place for you. Read those!"

"Those" were telegrams from Senators, Congressmen, and others recommending, insisting on the appointment of their man to the job he had just wished on me.

"My old Colonel asked me to clean up this district," Marshal Love said when I had finished reading. "And by the Holy Gods I'm going to run this office. No carpet-bagger is going to come in here to grab off this plum. And that's just what your job is, Bert. It pays

better than any job in this office. But it calls for hard work, courage on the trails, almost superhuman endurance and most of all, honesty in your investigations. I know you have these qualities, and I know you cannot be stopped once you start out to do a thing. Now in the morning I will advance you a thousand dollars. You purchase you a dog team, the best you can buy and a complete outfit. Your life may depend on your dogs and your outfit. So get the best!"

On the way out he showed me the Fairbanks Evening paper. In it was a long article about my having been appointed Deputy United States Marshal and Trailman and giving my experience in Alaska. I looked at him in amazement, and he smiled.

"You see, I knew I'd find you somewhere in town this morning."

I spent several days in getting together my equipment for the trail, but finally got an outfit to my liking. My sled I had made special. It was thirteen feet long, without a screw or bolt in it. Instead it was laced and tied with babiche that had been treated until it would not stretch when wet. The joints of the frame were mortised, and when completed it proved the finest sled in the district.

I have said I thought Percy Charles, the Chief Office Deputy had taken a dislike to me on my first, and pretty bum, appearance. One day, after I had been in the office perhaps a week, familiarizing myself with warrants, subpoenas, my authority, and the laws and codes of the Government, Charles handed me a warrant

with the words, "Here's a warrant for a man named Jack Smith, wanted for battery. He's either here in town or out on Esther Creek. Bring him in!"

I took the warrant and, feeling that if the man was in town Thompson or Braake would know it, I hit out for the Buffet. As it happened Braake had talked over the phone with Smith that morning. He was still on Esther Creek.

"You don't know this man, Smith, do you, Hansen?" Braake said to me.

"No."

"Well, let me tell you something. He's a hard bird. Fights at the drop of the hat, especially when he's been drinking. And from the sound of his voice over the phone this morning he's been doing it. He suspects a warrant is out for him."

"Thanks," I said, beginning to dislike my new job already.

"Be careful," Braake continued. "Jack Smith's beat up every Deputy that ever went after him, and a couple of 'em were about twice your size."

"Good news!" I said. "I don't think my official career is going to last long, or be a credit to the office."

Sort of a funny feeling riding for miles thinking about the nice beating that's coming to you at the end of the trail! But there I was with the warrant in my pocket and I'd have to serve it! What happened after that—well, it would just have to happen! I decided to give Mr. Smith a run for his money anyway, if they shipped me back in a crate!

At Esther Creek I got off the stage and began a search of the saloons for my man, and located him at one of the bars, with a group of his cronies. I sauntered up and ordered a drink. They sized me up, being I was a stranger. Then Smith faced me.

"Hey, you—have a drink with me!" It was not an invitation. It was a command.

"Sure."

As I raised the glass he demanded, trying to stare me down,

"Who the hell are you?"

"Here's luck;" I countered. "Now I'll buy one!"

After my round, I said to him, "Can I talk to you a moment, alone?"

His face froze. We stood staring at each other like a couple of mad tom-cats. Then he pushed himself off the bar. "C'mon!" he said and led the way to a corner table.

"Your name's Smith, isn't it?" I asked.

"That's me!"

"All right," I replied, thinking things would start moving fast from there on, "I've got a warrant for you." I took it out, gave it to him, and said, "Now, Smith, you go to your cabin and get your hat and coat and meet me on the three o'clock stage. No one need know about this unless you tell 'em yourself. I'm not saying anything to any one. But you be there. Now come on, I'll buy the drinks!"

With that I got up, rather hastily, I can assure you, and made for the bar. By the time Smith realized that

I had served him with a warrant, I had his glass of whisky all ready, and held it out to him as he approached me. He took it and drank automatically, and before he put the glass down I was off, with, "So long. I'll see you later."

As I beat it, I expected him to come busting out of the doors after me, but I kept on walking and finally realized that nothing was going to happen. Then I slowed up a bit!

At three o'clock, not having seen Smith in the meantime (and taking particular care not to put myself in his path), I went over to the waiting stage. I figured if he did come, it would be at the last possible moment, but there to my surprise was my man, all ready to go! I climbed up beside him, and neither of us spoke a word until we got to Esther Siding. Then he said,

"Lemme off. I want a drink."

"Nope! Can't do it, brother!"

I thought things would sure pop right then. Smith looked pretty mad, but he settled back with a muttered, "Oh hell!" and we rode on.

"Sorry, old man, but the law's the law. You're under arrest, now," I smiled, and slapped his shoulder. He looked at me and then said:

"Who the hell are you anyway? You act like a white man . . . first officer I ever see that treated a guy half-way decent!"

"Wasn't any need of publishing the news all over town, was there?"

He thought that over, then he exclaimed, "By Golly,

I'm glad I didn't beat all hell out of you, after all!"

"So'm I!"

"Listen," he said, as the stage neared Fairbanks. "When we get in, you hunt up Thompson of the Buffet and tell him to come on up and bail me out, will you?"

"Sure," I said. "The first thing. As soon as I get you locked up."

And I did. And then went to the office. As I stepped inside, Charles looked up from his desk. He waited a moment, expecting me to say something, but I didn't.

"I thought I gave you a warrant for Jack Smith, and told you to bring him in!"

"You did," I said, getting hot under the collar myself. I knew now he had expected Smith to beat the living daylights out of me.

"Well, where is he?"

"He's here in Fairbanks, somewhere," I said.

Then he blew up, as I thought he would, and said a lot of things. I waited until he ran down.

"Listen," I said, leaning over his desk, "you gave me a warrant for this bird, knowing he's beat up every Marshal that ever tried to arrest him. Well, when you give me a warrant, I'll serve it. But after this, you give me the low down on these fellows before I start! As for Smith, I got him and put him in jail."

"I thought you said he was running around Fairbanks."

"And so he is by this time. He asked me to tell Thompson to bail him out. Thompson and I walked

up here together. Smith is probably having a drink down at the Buffet. Which don't mean nothing to me. You wanted him and I got him. If you want him again gimme another warrant and I'll go get him again! But from now on, if you and I are going to get along, you give me the dope—and *all* the dope!"

I looked up and there in the doorway leading to his office stood Marshal Love, a broad grin on his face. I felt better.

In the years that followed, Charles and I became the closest of friends. And looking back at it, I can't blame him for wanting to see this new Marshal, dirty, unshaved and in overalls, get a proper introduction into the force. But Jack Smith fooled him—as I'm thankful to say, he fooled me!

And in justice to Smith I should say that he afterward became one of the best liked and most substantial men of that section. He was a fine fellow. Every time I think of the licking he could have, and didn't give me, I know just how fine a chap he really was.

And thus ended my first substantial mush, and my first official act as Deputy United States Marshal.

Then followed, throughout that winter, mushes into almost every part of the Interior. To Dawson, where prisoners were exchanged with the Royal Northwest Mounted Police; to Tanana; to Circle City, Fort Yukon, Nulatto, to Nenana, and so on. For the first time in years my restless soul was content. I had found a job I liked.

CHAPTER II

DOGS AND OTHER TRAILS

HERE's where I'd better explain a few things about traveling with dogs over Alaskan trails. It's funny but folks have told me they had the idea a man and team just started out across country, in the general direction of where he wanted to get, and if he was a good guesser, he got there!

Other folks have said they thought we had regular roads, even highways, with signs directing the musher. The facts are that both are right—to a certain extent.

Sometimes, going into little traveled places, a musher does hit out across country, making his trail as he goes, and sometimes he does the same thing on a traveled trail. Because it may be snowed over in twenty-four hours and become a white, seemingly uncharted waste.

The musher then has to break it out again. Sometimes, also, a trail is signed, we call it staked. But a trail may be staked to-day and unstaked to-morrow! Again, Alaska has highways; now but not in my time. The first railroads were in the making when I went there.

A trail that is much used we term a "broken" trail, such as some of the mail routes, where the trail is so

packed between storms that it becomes a sort of ditch and the dogs simply get into it and mush ahead.

The trail maps of Alaska show these established trails. They are marked now just as highways would be, which indeed they are. And along these established trails the real highways of the country have been built. The Richardson trail is an example.

Now while a "broken" may become an "unbroken" trail, in its true sense, an unbroken one means a strip of country into which few, if any, men have ever been, where there are no sign-posts to guide the musher, where there are no road-houses to welcome him and his dogs at night, where he is forced to make his own trail, his success depending on his dogs, his sense of direction, his ability to judge the nature of a country miles ahead from the course of the streams, the general lay of the land, timber conditions and the like.

For, on these unbroken trails, timber is one of the prime requisites. You live absolutely off your sled. You eat what you have with you, and what game you may be able to kill along the trail. You "Siwash" at night (camp out in the open) either around a fire, curled up in your robe or, if you have a complete outfit, in your tent. In which case you more than likely have a light "Yukon" stove. And so you must have wood to burn, not only for your own comfort and safety, but to cook your dog food. It is on these trails that a musher has to know his stuff.

Conditions are not so hazardous on broken trails. These follow the easiest going and the musher may find

shelter at approximately the end of each day's mush—trappers' cabins, road-houses, or the cabin of some Alaskan whose hospitality is well known. Few Alaskans turn the weary traveler away. I knew a couple that did. I'll tell you about them some night.

The rivers and creeks of Alaska play a great part in the making of the country's trails. As a general thing the broken trails lead to some stream down which the musher travels his way to point of departure nearest his destination. So it is that such rivers as the Yukon, the Tanana, the Porcupine, the Kuskoquim, the Koyukuk are in reality long arteries of commerce down which in the winter dog team after dog team travels, transporting the business of the country.

The creeks, the tributaries of these larger streams that are so geographically located as to offer easy trails, also play their part, and one can not speak of the trails without mentioning dozens of these streams. The Little Delta River, the Chena, Birch Creek, Mastodon Creek, the Kobuk River, Preacher Creek, the Iditarod River, all are a part of that great system of highways, unique in the world, the highway of dogs!

But because they are established trails don't get the idea that they are without danger to the musher. Take for example the Minto Lakes Region. Not a musher but breathes a sigh of relief when this is behind him. Many a man has lost his life in the Minto Lakes, due to the overflows. Birch Creek, Chatanika Creek, Faith, Hope, and Charity Creeks are but a few I could name of the creeks which form parts of established travel trails that

are a continual menace to the musher. The Yukon Flats, Forty Mile, the Ramparts, all on the Yukon have taken their toll of both dogs and men. I have worked for hours, worked until I could hardly stand, wrestling with a heavy load, such as the body of a dead man, in an effort to conquer the hummock ice of the Yukon; making perhaps two miles an hour, fighting every step of the way, cursing and crying and fighting a trail that seemed impossible.

Above Kockrines is another bad stretch of the Yukon, that the experienced musher looked back upon with joy in his heart.

No indeed, established trails do not spell safety and comfort. They owe their being to the fact that they were the quickest and most feasible routes over which a man might drive a dog team. For after all a musher's life and safety depend on the life and safety of his dogs. A man is only as good as his dogs when he is on the trails of Alaska!

And that being true, perhaps it might be well to give you what I have learned of Alaskan dogs. Perhaps you would like to know my dogs, those pals of the trails that took me over sixty thousand miles of known and unknown Alaska, who gave their lives for me, some of them, and who shall always hold a hallowed place in my heart.

"Hansen, get yourself the best dogs in the country. You'll need them!" Marshal Love had told me. So, from my first day in the office I set out to know something about dogs. What I learned, I learned by driving them,

by handling them day after day, as we mushed over thousands of miles.

The Alaskan dog is an alien, he has the wolf strain, but underneath this many times, is the typical dog loyalty; the willingness to give to his master the last of his strength. But he has only so much strength to give, so he must be guarded and fostered by the driver all the time. You don't put a dog in the harness and forget all about him, you watch out for him all the way, as he watches out for you!

Even with the greatest care, nearly all driven dogs succumb in old age to their unconquerable enemy, rheumatism! While it would seem that nature has given them ample protection against the rigors of the country, yet she did not take into consideration their masters, and how they would drive them forth in all weathers, trying their strength and superb vitality to the last ounce.

Dogs in harness cannot always avoid getting wet, and then, if the musher has not their welfare at heart—which is really his own welfare—his dogs become worthless cripples before their time. Old dogs in Alaska are pensioned off; or when they are no longer fast enough for the team and the trail, they are sold to some lone prospector. They are then called "One-man dogs" and they are only used to make short trips into town and back, most of the time the man pulling in the harness with his dog!

I've always maintained that a dog is as good as his feet in Alaska. And that's a fact, one of the most

important for the newcomer, who intends to travel behind a dog team, to learn. He must never forget it!

Say the dogs run into an overflow on the frozen river surface. There have been a few leaders that could smell the water, and then would not step foot into it, but many a good leader will run smack into it, and take the whole team after him before the driver knows it. Especially is this true if the overflow has occurred when there is snow on the ice, for then neither man nor dog can see the water.

What happens when your dogs hit an overflow? You have to stop right there, even if it's forty below zero, take off your mittens, and with bare hands and a little piece of blanket, wipe the water and the bits of ice from between each toe of each foot of every dog. Suppose you're driving seven dogs. That makes twenty-eight feet. That means one hundred and forty toes. Can you imagine what your hands feel like while doing this little job? If you ever get into sixty-below weather, try it! The water becomes ice, the bits of ice grind into the dog's feet, lacerate them, then freeze them, and you've got a hundred and forty toes leaving bloody marks on the trail. And pretty soon a hundred and forty toes that won't touch the trail at all! You can tell this is going to happen when you see your dogs begin to lift their feet as if they'd stepped on a red hot stove; and that's what it feels like!

I've mushed along Alaskan trails for miles, following a path blazed red by the blood of dogs, and I'm sorry to say, there are times when this cannot be

avoided. Take the mail drivers, sometimes as many as thirty dogs in a string, hauling a thousand pounds or a ton of mail and express, trying to make schedule time with a storm raging, the mercury way down, and having to keep up a pace that taxes their dogs' strength to the limit. Well, it's no wonder the trails run red.

Let me say right here that I consider the mail men of Alaska about the most "skookum" men in the world. The bravest, the most conscientious, and the least appreciated among the Government's thousands of servants.

I've passed 'em, when the fog that comes with extreme cold weather was so thick they couldn't see any farther than the swing dog's ears, wrestling with a load that was just plain hell to handle (over hummock ice or niggerheads), fighting on and on through the day, far into the night, driven not only by their sense of duty, but by that vital something one finds in every true Alaskan—that determination to finish a task begun!

The mailman's team is not so much picked for speed as for heart and stamina, for pulling power. It is in these teams that the larger breeds of dogs are found.

Some day an appreciative Government, or some humane society, will erect in Alaska a fitting monument to her dogs, an acknowledgement to the world of the great part they have played in making of this vast land something besides its initial nickname, "Seward's Folly."

In southeastern and southwestern Alaska, dogs are not so indispensable as in the Interior and on the Sew-

ard Peninsula. But in the winter, in the Interior, dogs are almost the only possible means of getting anywhere.

Now I didn't get my crack dog teams by simply going around Fairbanks and buying them. They represented months of search, and months of labor in training. They were the pick of over a thousand dogs I tried out and whose performance on the trails I studied.

Before I tell you of these companions of mine, let's take a look at the various types of dogs and kinds of strains.

The McKenzie River husky gets his name naturally from the river, which runs north into the Arctic Ocean just across the boundary line in Canada. They are the true northern dog, and there are many tales told of their origin. Now when I say these dogs are the true northern dog, I shall, undoubtedly, be criticized, for many men consider the Malemute the original Alaskan dog. He may be, if one goes back to the beginnings. That I don't know, nor does any body else, for that matter.

But most dog mushers consider the husky the real, the true northern dog, and most drivers in the Interior prefer the husky to all other strains. One story of the origin of the husky is at least interesting, and I give it to you without comment save that it has wide credence among many Alaskans. I believe however that Mr. Stefansson says that these dogs are to be found in Labrador. If so, that contradicts somewhat the belief current among the Eskimo of the Tundra country, and

many of the whites. Here is the story as it was told to me:

A native bitch is taken into the timber, tied to a tree and left for the wolf to mate with her. The man who owns the bitch either drives the wolf away or kills him immediately after mating, otherwise the wolf turns and kills the bitch—so they say.

Whether this story has foundation in fact, there is undoubtedly somewhere a wolf strain in these dogs. One sees it many times in the long, slanting eyes, the wolf muzzle, and the hang of the tail. Most of the huskies have wolf in them, because the breeders have deliberately tried for this strain. The more wolf, the more independent the dog; the more he refuses to make up to his master, and the more he refuses to make friends with the other dogs. There are good team dogs of the predominant wolf strain that will leave the camp and strike out for the nearest timber the moment the harness is taken off. They stay there until feeding time, or all night, returning at the call of food, or the sight of the harness.

In many cases these seemingly wild dogs make good leaders; they never pick a quarrel. Of course they will mix instantly if there is a general free-for-all. If one dog in a team starts a fight, immediately they all try to join in. This happens almost invariably, and it makes it pretty tough for the musher!

The husky is a real fur-bearing animal. That is, his fur becomes prime in the winter, the same as the fox, the mink or the wolverine.

Underneath the long guard hairs comes a thick, close body fur. They are large dogs, large boned; and long and rangy like the wolf. The nose is not quite so pointed, the ears are short and the hair short and rather coarse. These dogs are, I might say, the most dependable of all Alaskan breeds and the most intelligent unless it be the Llewellyn Setter, which cannot properly be classed as an Alaskan dog. They will pull until they drop.

Now we will take the Malemute. Most authorities claim that the Malemute belongs to the same strain as the husky. One explanation, however, of the difference in the two dogs, is that the Malemute has become what he is through long association with the Indian. To my mind the Malemute is a Siwash dog. What domesticity he has taken on is the Siwash kind, just as—if he is with the whites—the bit of civilization he gets under his hide is the white civilization.

Now if there is anything lower than a river Siwash it has never hit Alaska! They are of inferior mentality, lazy, dirty, good for nothing, fish-eating Indians. And they are not inquisitive as to the age of the fish. They make their living, not by working, but by letting their squaws work for them. Up and down the rivers, wherever you find a settlement of these Indians, you will find a fish-wheel in the river. And always in a Siwash village will be a bunch of starving Indian dogs. Homeless, hungry, savage thieves!

They wait on the river banks for a boat to come in, and then, if the owner isn't wise to them, they eat him

out of house and home while he is ashore. I've a picture of these dogs waiting for me to get off my boat at Kockrines, a village far down the Yukon. Robber dogs, perched along the river bank, watching a chance to sneak down and strip the boat! They don't stop at canvas "tarp" or anything else, and if they can't swallow it, they chew it to bits trying!

Some lovers of the Indian make the excuse that these dogs are mongrel, an inferior breed. That is true many times, but just as many times if one were to take a handful of these dogs and put some food in their bellies, some meat on their bones, he'd find that he had a bunch of dogs that couldn't be told externally from any other Malemutes.

I have trained Malemutes; even made some of them into good trail dogs. But as a general thing I laid off them. It's hard to take a dog that has been brought up on beatings, and make him respond to anything but the club. However, the Malemutes have this advantage over the husky. They are lighter, and that means—when mushing over soft, unbroken trails—they are splendid in the lead, for they pack the trail, where the heavier dog would break through. But, as I said, the Malemute is brought up on the club, and the only time a good musher uses a club or a whip, is when his dogs are fighting.

Right here let me say of the Alaskan dog: He's an independent sort of a walloper. He doesn't like crowding. He wants all the room that belongs to him, and no trespassing, and he won't take having a couple or more

trail-mates land on top of him. He doesn't wait to find out why, but just up and rips their bellies open. Then the moment the rest of the team smells blood, they go wild, and believe me, the musher has a job on his hands. I found a doubled-up dog chain the best medicine in cases like this.

Old timers know that it is never safe to lose your balance when working with the team. Just don't get off your feet, that's all! It's a signal for a free-for-all, with the dogs making a carpet out of you! Sure, I've fallen among them, have scars to show for it. If you do fall, let out a yell that splits your throat, and get to your feet as quick as the Lord will let you. Take command immediately.

Wolf strain explains it. The creatures of the wild know one law: to fight to protect their lives! If there is the sound of battle, or the slip of a body against theirs, instinctively they strike out with their fangs to guard themselves. If it happens to be the man they'd pull their hearts out for, and whom they really love, they don't realize it—they are answering the generations-old impulse of the wild!

The scrappiest fool dog I ever had, except Major, was Chena, a Malemute. But he was also the prettiest dog I've ever set eyes on, or ever expect to. I also had a good leader that was a Malemute—Candy. Not as good as Tip or Tuesday, but then they represented the last word in dog intelligence.

But on the whole the Malemute is mean and treacherous, with a sort of tricky viciousness that makes him

untrustworthy. Sometimes he develops into a good puller, but as often as not, if the going is hard, he'll decide he's done enough for that day, and you can't make him pull another pound. Now my "Bird Dogs," as I called them, were a different stripe. Often I'd drive them all day and through the night, with only a stop for raw-meat feeding (a dog can gulp a hunk of raw meat and go right on traveling; feed him wet food and start him out and he'll vomit inside of half a mile) and never a whimper, just pull, pull!

The Flaxman Island husky is another Northern dog, found along the Arctic Coast. The most beautiful of all Alaskan dogs, very small, hardly ever weighing more than thirty-five pounds, but with no end of stamina. Wide foreheads, sharp, pointed ears that are always pricked forward, bright eyes that seem ever to be twinkling with humor, and a beautiful coat. Intelligent, kindly, even loving—the last two traits uncommon in Northern dogs—they make the best companions ever.

I have described the various standard breeds of dogs common in Alaska, but my two best teams were not of these breeds at all. I got them after long and "watchful" waiting. They were of mixed strains; some of them lie out there now on the wind-swept tundra, one in the Fairbanks cemetery—pals that gave their all, even unto their lives for me.

Later on I'll tell you about my prize teams, and how I got them. Funny thing about them, too, each team was of different breeding, but each was made up of males, all brothers. For let me tell you, if a musher's

only got sense enough to come in out of the rain, he knows more than to drive a bitch on the trails! And believe me I've had many a bad moment because some flat-head in front of me had a female in his outfit.

I remember one time when I was going from Fairbanks to Circle City, a musher ahead of me some miles had a female in his team. Of course I didn't know it. Old Tues was in the lead that day; I was driving nine dogs—a mixed team, part of my “days of the week” as I called them and part of them my “bird dogs,” one of which was Major. We were racing along, the snow scudding from the dogs' feet and flying from the runners, when suddenly Tuesday shoved his muzzle down into the soft snow and stopped dead in his tracks. Before you could say scat, on top of and over old Tues went those eight other dogs, the sled and, flat on my face, myself. I was on my feet at once and in among them. Believe me a snarling, snapping, fighting tangle of nine dogs is no joke any time; but when you've got them all strung out and in harness and they pile up, it's just plain rapid-fire hell.

Well, I saved my dogs; kicked and cuffed them all over the place and managed to keep them from killing each other. After about fifteen minutes of strenuous work I got them strung out on the trail again, but it took me another half hour to untangle and to repair their harness. Then, sizzling like a boiler, I lit out as fast as I could push my team. I knew darned well what was the trouble and I wanted to catch that musher. And believe me, I caught him!

I don't think, after what I said to him, he'll ever drive a bitch in his team again. It simply can't be done unless you want every dog driver in Alaska to curse you out and back again.

CHAPTER III

TUESDAY

TUESDAY was the greatest leader that ever mushed the trails of Interior Alaska, and just about the best friend a man ever had. I have intrusted my life to him a hundred times during the years in which he took me safely over more than twenty thousand miles of Alaskan trails. I didn't have to worry, when he was in the lead for never once did he lose the trail, no matter how badly obliterated; no matter how tough the weather.

Perhaps that doesn't sound like so much to you, but any Alaskan will know what it means to a musher. Just a little matter of life and death, that's all!

I have been on the trails with Tuesday when even the mail men, the hardiest of all mushers, would be holed up somewhere waiting for the weather to break. Beneath my feet an unbroken patch of white, ahead and around me the driving snow, or fog so thick that I could not see Friday's muzzle (Friday was the first swing dog in this team).

Far out ahead was Old Tues. Ahead of him no well-established trail, only a sea of drifted snow. But beneath that snow somewhere, at varying depths, was the old trail, still holding the scent of countless dogs that had mushed before. With never any indecision, without

breaking his pace, Old Tues forged ahead. Every little while, down into the soft snow would go his muzzle; a long whiff, then up would come his blessed old head and on we'd go!

Twice he saved my life. Once when we were mushing down the Yukon on our way to Nulato. It was getting toward the spring; my dogs were strung out in a long line, racing down the snow-covered ice, I racing along behind them, shouting and singing at the top of my voice, when suddenly the ice gave way and I was in the river, clinging to the handlebars, the back end of the sled submerged.

I had not called to Tuesday. It happened too quickly. But right there that dog proved he had some instinct, some intelligence that raised him far above the average.

The natural thing for Tuesday, or for any man or dog to have done, would have been either to surge ahead in the harness, trying to take up the drag, or to have turned toward the shore where lay the promise of safety from the breaking ice.

Instead, he whirled, instantly, at right angles, swinging out toward the middle of the river, dragged the other dogs with him, dug his toes into the snow for all he was worth and kept on swinging until he had cramped the sled, and there, still straining, held it, held it until I could scramble up and out. It was the only possible thing that could have saved me. Had he made any other move, myself, sled, dogs and all would have gone into the river and nothing but a clear patch of glare ice would have told the next musher the tale.

How did that dog know what to do? Don't ask me! All I can tell you is that he did it!

On another occasion, while he did not actually save my life, he would have, had I not been able to rescue myself before he got help for me.

This little experience illustrates one of the many hidden dangers of the trails. Terrifying because they often leave their victims alive, yet absolutely unable to help themselves. They simply stay where Alaska has hurled them and die from starvation or exposure.

As I have said, whenever possible, mushers take to the rivers, because the ice usually makes the smoothest and fastest going. But many times ice will form and the water recede from under it, leaving a cavern beneath the surface.

This is what is known as "drum-ice" and is always a peril. From the surface it looks like any other. Usually when the driver hits it the sound warns him, and he proceeds pronto to get off. Often, however, before he is aware, there comes a hollow crack and a boom, and he finds himself down amongst gravel and boulders on the dry bed of the stream. He is lucky if he has not broken a leg or an arm, or even his neck, for he may be anywhere from ten to thirty feet beneath the ice.

And there he is! His dogs, if they have not fallen in on top of him, have probably raced on down the river. From the surface there is nothing to show that underneath that jagged hole a man lies injured, or unconscious. Other mushers may pass by, swinging their teams wide to miss the hole, and mush on, never knowing

that they have passed within five or ten feet of the place where a man is doomed to die.

And that's just what happened to me! Fortunately I had not broken any bones. But there I was, in a huge cavern about a hundred and fifty feet in circumference, that ran between two islands and formed a large, blue, dome-like amphitheater whose edges sloped in a great circle down to the gravelly shores.

Above me, beckoning, was the hole I had made in dropping through! But around me not a thing I could use to enable me to get up to that hole, which, I can tell you, seemed to be miles away, instead of the actual ten or twelve feet.

I heard a whine and there, looking anxiously down at me, was faithful old Tuesday. He had missed me at the sled, and circled back until he found me. He whined and barked as I spoke to him, and seemed to be saying, "Old Pal, you're in a hell of a mess, aren't you? What can I do to help?"

Yeah, it's all fancy, I know. He probably wasn't saying anything of the kind but—anyway, I never saw a dog look so intelligently worried. He circled back and forth, stopping every little bit to dig his paws into the ice on the edge of the break and to lean far down as if he were going to leap in and join me. I did a lot of heavy thinking, I can tell you. I knew that about ten miles down the river there was a cabin where we had been in the habit of stopping.

So I waved my hand in that direction and ordered Tuesday to mush. He barked, turned his head the way

I had motioned, and then looked down as though trying to read my mind. I tell you, unless you have gone through such an experience, you cannot understand! I know that dog was trying his damndest to savvy! And I think he did. Anyway, with a last pathetic look, he turned and mushed off. I could hear the pad, pad, of the feet of the other dogs as he led them on, and then, as I stared up, I caught a fleeting glimpse of the basket of my sled. They were gone!

I was alone . . . my life staked. Would Tuesday do what I hoped? I knew that if my dogs showed up without me whoever was at the cabin would immediately set out on the back trail and follow it until he found me, or found where I had died.

I figured it would take four hours at best before I could expect any help. It was beastly cold down there in my crystalline tomb, and I had to do something about it. I went all around my prison, tried to pry boulders out of the river bed in the hope that I might pile them up high enough to let me reach the edge of the ice, but they were frozen solidly into the gravel.

I searched my pockets for my knife, but I had come off without it. Just one of those little things that even the most careful musher will sometimes neglect, and upon which maybe his life will depend!

Finally, following the stream bed I came upon a place where it gradually sloped upward, and where there was a spot from which I could reach the ice overhead. Now, if I had had my knife, I could have, in time, cut my way out.

I pounded on the ice, losing my head a bit for a time I think. I was in one of those strange panics a man sometimes gets into when he finds himself absolutely up against it. I cursed and pounded on that ice until my fist went numb. Then, reason returned. Calm, once more, I stared about me at the ice, at the gravel bed of the river— Another musher had made his last mush, that was all!

Men do that, I've noticed. They rave and rant, but suddenly they seem to grow calm as if to ask: What's the odds anyway?

And then they get mad, rationally mad. Anyway, that's the way it worked on me. I hadn't the least idea but that I had come to the end of my trail. Yet I was determined I'd have one more try. I got down on my hands and knees and I pawed at every rock and boulder in that whole damned place. Not one I could budge! Back over them I went, time and time again. I don't know how long this kept up. It got to be a sort of a game, an automatic thing, on which my whole energy was centered. I'll bet, if any one had seen me, he'd have sent me out to Portland, along with Dan O'Leary and the rest of the "gone crazy" Alaskans.

But the thing was serious to me. I had to have a boulder! And in the end I got one; dug it out of that frozen gravel. My fingers were cut almost to ribbons, but still I growled and clawed at that darn stone. It was my life—and I got it!

Then I began to pound a hole in the ice! Hours! Hours of frenzied effort. But I did it. Through more

than twelve inches of solid ice, a hole big enough to squeeze through, drag myself up on top.

Completely done in, I lay on the surface, getting my strength back and suffering the nerve reaction that came with the realization that I was safe.

Lord, but Alaska, that old river surface, the cut banks and the bits of timber looked good to me. There hasn't been a time since when I have ever said that this world wasn't a pretty fine place to be.

In a little while I got up and started down the river. I had not gone more than a mile when racing around the bend came my faithful team, and behind them the trapper. He told me Tuesday and the dogs had come tearing up off the river and into the clearing where he was sawing wood. He knew, of course, that something had happened to me and had set right out to find me.

Do you wonder—I don't—that Alaskans called Tuesday my "brains," that they said it was only because of him that I was able to make some of the mushes I made?

Old Tues succumbed to rheumatism, got from the hardest mush we ever made, which included starvation as well as the usual trail strain. He never went out on the trails again, but he would hobble to the Marshal's office and sit there, waiting for the word to go, begging with his eyes! Finally he got so bad he could no longer go that far. His last days were spent on a pillow, and he was as carefully tended as a baby. He suffered terribly; his moans nearly broke my heart. I knew it would

he kindness to put him out of his misery, and yet I couldn't bring myself to do it.

One night, toward morning, I'd been trying to help him, talking to him, and smoothing his head—I just couldn't let it go on any longer, so I dressed and went for the best doctor in Fairbanks, to see if there wasn't anything to be done to ease his pain, at least. You can guess how that "prominent physician and surgeon" received the news when I woke him up at three o'clock in the morning and asked him to come give a sleeping powder to a dog!

"Go get a veterinary!" he snapped.

"I don't want a horse doctor! I want him to have the best there is!" I urged.

"I don't know anything about doctoring dogs, and I don't want to!" and he started to slam the door, but I grabbed it and held on.

"Doc, you've got to come! Perhaps you can do something for him. I can't stand it any longer! Maybe there's something you can give him to ease him up a bit! It's Old Tues, doc, and I tell you something's got to be done!"

"Old Tues! Why the devil didn't you tell me! Wait a minute!"

But there wasn't anything that any one could do. The doctor put him to sleep painlessly.

They printed his death in the paper, just like anybody else. Lots of folk came over to tell me how sorry they felt, but it wasn't until I put my old pal in his coffin, lined with the best silk money could buy, and all the

time crying like a baby so I couldn't see the road, that I knew just what people really thought of Tues. For as I drove along, without a word, teams and drivers fell in line behind me, so that when I went down Cushman Street out to the Fairbanks Cemetery, where a grave was waiting for him, there was a regular funeral procession for Old Tues—and flowers!

Well, the trails were never the same without Old Tues.

CHAPTER IV

MAJOR

IN striking contrast to Tuesday was Major, who also was one of a team of brothers. They were, I believe, the fastest dogs ever in the country; at least four of their records stand to-day.

When I first bought these dogs, Major, Tip, Sox, Brownie, Buff, Monkey and Red, those who knew me and who also knew dogs gave me the laugh.

At that time in Fairbanks there was a man named Mathews, who at some earlier period in his life, had been a keeper of kennels or some such thing for English Royalty. He had come into Alaska in the early days and had made a study of the native dogs, the dogs that had been imported and of the country and the qualities necessary in dogs for the trail.

Like all men who have studied Alaskan dogs, he found that while the husky had certain good qualities, the Llewellyn setter others, the Malemute still others, all dogs were comparatively slow in the trail.

He began to visualize the ideal dog, a dog that would combine all the fine qualities of certain breeds. He finally decided that if he crossed the husky with the Llewellyn setter and then, re-crossed this cross with the hound for speed, he would be able to develop the ideal

trail dog for the Arctic. But Mathews and his experiments were more or less of a joke to many Alaskans.

It's a funny thing when you consider it, but there, in a country where the dog plays such an important rôle, there has been very little scientific breeding. Most of the crossing has been done by the dogs themselves, and some of the results are funny, to say the least. And I must admit that Mathews had some of the oddest-looking things to be called dogs I ever laid my eyes on.

I had many a talk with Mathews and knew that if he ever did get what he was after he would have something superior.

One day he sent for me and showed me what he said was the result of his years of labor: a triple cross, the husky, the setter and the hound, and he made predictions as to what these dogs would do. Well, we looked them over; the pups were then five months old and were beginning to show what they would be when fully grown.

I picked a lot of faults in them, such as Tip's big spreading feet, for example, and all that. For they were different from any dogs I had ever seen. No two of them looked alike, each showed some marked difference. Tip resembled an immense Newfoundland, or bird dog, even to the spotted moccasins, was good natured and readily handled. But to one side, head swinging low between his legs, a head shaped entirely different from that of Tip or his brothers, was a dog that radiated independence, and something almost sinister.

"What do you call that fellow?"

“Major! Doesn’t he act like one? Hard-boiled and full of cockiness. Wouldn’t take him to be from the same litter, would you?”

“He interests me,” I said, stepping over to where the pup stood, facing me, never giving an inch.

“Watch out!” called Mathews, as I reached out my hand. “He’s liable to bite it off for you!”

“Savage, eh?” I said, straightening up and studying the dog. He gazed at me out of red-rimmed, unblinking eyes.

“Well, he’s a bit independent,” said his owner.

“I like him,” I said.

“If he can be made tractable, he’s the nearest to the——”

“What will you take for the lot?” I broke in.

“One thousand dollars.”

Now a thousand dollars was a lot of money for seven dogs that were unbroken to the trails.

“I’ll see if I can raise it,” I said, after studying the pups a while longer. “If I can I’ll buy them. They look interesting and they’re big enough framed to be worth something.”

“Hansen,” he said to me earnestly, “if I know anything about dogs, these seven are the best in Alaska to-day. Trained properly, they should set records. I’ll guarantee that when they are grown they will outrun anything in the country.”

“I’ll gamble with you, anyway,” I said. “Hold them until I can raise the money.”

I left him and hunted up the Second National Bank

of Fairbanks. I met him coming up Fourth Street and laid my need before him.

His name was Peter Vidovich and he was everywhere known as the Second National Bank of Fairbanks. He never banked a cent of money in his life, as far as any one knew, and yet he was rolling in it. Always carried a big hunk of it on him in a greasy wallet or greasier money belt. He dressed something like a bum, looked like a man who didn't have a dime.

But he was always ready to make a loan at a moment's notice, even up to fifty thousand dollars, if he thought the borrower trustworthy. Many times he did make such loans without a bit of security save his own judgment in a fellow's integrity.

Peter Vidovich in a way represents the spirit of Alaska. Here, in your so-called more civilized regions, you folks all seem to be trying to get the best of the other chap, you won't be human for fear it will cost you something; your loans are not made on the only sound basis, the integrity of the borrower. Indeed, you hope he won't pay. But not in Alaska. Thank God, up there a man's a man, not a calculating-machine, and most of them are still human.

In all the years I knew Peter Vidovich, I do not think he lost five hundred dollars and I know that he made loans that would total hundreds of thousands without a scratch of security. When men in Alaska have to have money, they have to have it right off. Especially is this true when winter sets in, and supplies are needed.

Take my own case. It was nothing for me to buy a

thousand dollars' worth of dog feed at a time, and perhaps ten cases of milk at eighty dollars a case. Then it was that the Second National Bank, Peter Vidovich, was a life-saver.

Well, I stopped him and told him what I needed, what I intended to do with the money, and without a word, except to ask me if I thought the dogs worth that much, he gave me the thousand dollars.

Through the months I trained those dogs, every musher in that section had a lot of fun kidding me and making sport of them. And they had reason. Those seven dogs were so different from all the other dogs around there that I didn't blame the boys for razzing me.

But with the help of old Tuesday, I got them trained for the trails and the day came when I took them out on the Chena, and timed them down the river and back. I never said a word when I got back to Fairbanks, but I sure hugged myself mentally. I knew that I had the fastest dog team in the district.

But there was one dog that would never make up to me, never showed any affection whatsoever, never gave an inch, either to me or to any dog in the kennels. I soon learned he was a fighting fool. He never hunted trouble, seemed to be too indifferent, even, toward the other dogs to want to hunt trouble; but let one of them pick on him, or crowd him the least bit! Boy, he almost eliminated four dogs for me!

Fight! One could hardly call it that. He never gave the other dog a chance to get started. That flat, long-

muzzled head swinging low to the ground, his eyes red-rimmed, his feet planted far apart and his body somewhat on an angle, without a waste motion, he simply proceeded to annihilate any dog that interfered with him.

I have been so mad at him a hundred times that I wanted to kill him. For I learned very early in the game that he had something that made him a menace always and anywhere, except when chained in the kennels.

He hated an Indian, any dark-skinned person, and he hated children. He seemed to think it was his duty to kill at least one dog out of every team that passed us on the trail, and to try to kill every little girl or Indian that got close to him. Funny, isn't it? But it wasn't funny to me.

I soon found out that he was the most intelligent dog in the bunch. Not, perhaps, with the intelligence—bordering on the human—of old Tuesday, but with an instinctive sort of savvy far superior to any other dog I ever owned.

He would have made a world beater as a leader. I tried him at it. He gave me a convincing demonstration. I was making a short trip, and being curious about this fellow I put him in the lead. Up the trail we went until we hit the river and then we simply sailed. A light snow had fallen the night before and the going was ideal. Everything went lovely. Then without any command Major began to swing to the right. I yelled him into the trail but he swung right out again. That happened two or three times and then that sucker simply swung

right out, made a wide circle back toward the sled, sat down on his hind end and quit. Well, I was boiling I can tell you. I went up to him, grabbed him by the collar, pulled him back into the trail and started dragging him on ahead.

About fifteen feet . . . and then, smack, I stepped into water up to my ankles . . . and about as cold water as one would want to find.

Well, I got out of there in a hurry, dried my feet in front of a fire, changed to dry socks—I always carried an extra pair of socks for just such an emergency—and while I was doing it I sat and looked at that fellow. The sucker had smelled that open water all of a hundred yards before we came to it. And do you think I could drive him into it. Not a chance. Alaskans will know just how valuable a dog with that instinct is as a leader. Then, too, he was fast. I think he could outrun any of his brothers. So I hugged the idea that I had a wonder dog.

Returning I drove up in front of the Court-house, hitched my sled as usual, and went inside. Out there, with plenty of room to range, was Major, at the head of that string of dogs.

I never got half the length of the corridor. I heard the darnedest yell, the barking of dogs, and knew something was doing.

Well, an Indian, intent on his own affairs, had come walking down Cushman Street past my team, and without any warning whatever, Major tore the pants off him. I can see that Indian yet, racing down the main

street of Fairbanks, his shirt-tail flapping in the breezes. He was a scared red man.

In the days that followed I had plenty of proof that this had not been an accidental happening. Even in his puppy days he gave plenty of evidence that he was different from his brothers. In fact those seven dogs were all different from any dogs I had ever handled heretofore.

Now while there are many ways of handling dogs, from that of the Indian who uses the club or whip, to the various methods used by the whites, I have always believed in just one way—kindness. I don't mean coddling, for the musher doesn't live who got anywhere by coddling a hundred pounds of Alaskan dog! It simply can't be done. One thing your dogs must understand right from the jump off—that you are the boss! That fact must be impressed upon each dog so thoroughly that he never forgets it, except perhaps in those moments of hysteria when something goes wrong on the trail, such as a musher suddenly plopping down beside him without warning.

You can be the big king-pin, and can still be kind. It takes longer, but the end justifies the means.

There are so many things involved in making a team out of a raw bunch of dogs that I cannot even begin to touch upon them. But by kindness I mean just what I say. Let your dogs know you have their welfare at heart, look after their comfort, never let any member of your team feel that you are not giving him a square deal, and at the same time make him understand you

demand and expect to get from him the ultimate best that is in him. If he is a good dog, he'll repay you on the trails.

I always used Tuesday in training a team. I sang to my dogs, sang and shouted and whooped it up, running along behind the sled, making of the going a sort of game which they entered into with zest and eagerness, barking, lunging and running their heads off.

But with these "bird dogs" I had a problem. There ran in their veins the bloods of three distinct breeds. I know scientific sharks will say that they would react to the strain that was dominant. That may be so. But my problem was—which strain was dominant, and when, and sometimes, I can tell you, I wondered why, too!

In fact I found that no one strain was dominant in all those dogs. Also, under certain emotions or in an unexpected situation, traits from the other strains would crop out and thus present a new problem. Oh, that was a sweet summer, that summer I worked training that team.

One thing I discovered early in the game; they were far more savage than any other dogs I had ever known. Of the whole bunch, Tip, the biggest of the lot, and the pullingest fool I have ever owned, was the only one that seemed to pack around under his hide a good-natured view of the world. Sox was uncertain; Monkey full of the old Nick—playing dog jokes on his mates, jokes that always carried an edge. Brownie sulked off to himself, was a sort of bookish type, full of cynicism

and dyspepsia. He asked no odds, only to be left alone to think his own dog thoughts, and God help the dog that interrupted his reveries!

Buff and Red took life as it came, and if it didn't come fast enough they set out to stir up some excitement. What Buff started Red helped to finish. They were a mischievous pair.

Buff and Tip showed a preponderance of the setter strain, while Monkey showed more hound and husky. And apart from them all was this devil, Major! Even when five months old—and Mathews told me he had been that way since birth—he traveled alone.

I could go into the kennels, and be greeted with a bark or a wag of the tail or perhaps a playful threat of violence, until I came to that fellow. Not a thing did I ever get from him, to acknowledge the importance of my existence!

Early I learned that he didn't give a hoot for me, or for my lordly manner of authority. The first time I went to put a collar on him, he bit my finger to the bone, did it so deliberately, and yet with such a bursting loose of savagery, that I gave way before him and for a time just stared down at his blood-rimmed, wall eyes, in amazement. Then I cursed him and made a dive for him.

But he sprang at me, and in just two minutes I was a sight. He had ripped my clothes off my back, left fang marks in my hide, and I was bleeding from a half-dozen places, while all about us pandemonium, dogs howling and barking and lunging at their chains. They would

all of them liked to mix in on it. They smelled blood. I finally succeeded in choking him. I put his collar on while he lay there. I hoped the sucker would never come to.

There is a stubborn streak in my nature somewhere. Tell me I can't do a thing and I'll do it or bust a hame. And it began to percolate through me as I stared down at that devil that he and I were going to battle royally before he ever admitted I was the boss. All the little things I had noticed about him began to associate themselves together in my mind; his aloofness from his mates, the tail always still, the calm unwinking stare with which he met all who approached him, that low-flung head and those long jaws in which were some of the wickedest fangs I ever saw.

"By God," I promised him, "I'll tame you, you devil, if I never see the back of my neck."

When he came to, he fought for thirty minutes to get that collar off. I let him fight it out, standing there talking to him, telling him just how big a damned fool he was.

He quit fighting as quickly as he had begun, and stood, legs spread out, head swinging low, staring out at me from under shaggy brows.

It wasn't until I took him to Smith Brothers' Hardware store to get a collar and harness fitted to him, that I got an insight into just what I was going to be up against. Smith's two little girls were in the store at the time. No sooner had I taken the collar off Major, and Smith had leaned down to try another one on him, than

he was gone, like a shot, across that store, and right on top of those two kids!

Smith and I got to him before he had done any damage other than to tear the dress off of one of the girls. A collar back on him, the chain wrapped around my hand, I realized I was so mad, and so damned scared, I could have killed him!

While I was trying to get a grip on myself, and Smith was soothing his two kids, I studied that beast. I think if he had shown any conscience I'd have felt differently. But he just stood there, head down, staring unwinkingly off at nothing, ignoring the curses that were rolling out of me . . . a dog . . . master of his own destiny, and sufficient unto himself, determined to go his own sweet way.

"Better get rid of that outlaw," Smith said. "He's a bad dog!"

"I'll make a good dog out of him, or I'll kill him," I promised grimly.

Smith shook his head skeptically, and from then on, though he would hand me dog collars, he wouldn't get anywhere near Major's head.

Why didn't I kill him or give him away? Because, out on the trail he was a wonder! He was the first of the lot to understand the meaning of commands. And pull!—If I yelled "Mush" even old Tues was not in motion before Major surged into his collar. If his lunge took him against the dog in front of him he simply opened those jaws and helped himself to a bite. Believe me, that other dog got into motion in a hurry.

And I have never seen him do anything but pace: even in the wild runaways those dogs staged going out of or back into Fairbanks, runaways that are still remembered by old-timers.

But always he had his eye on the main chance. He never missed a thing when on the trails, whether it was dog or human. Let a team come up the trail toward us, and it was a sure bet that he'd get either a dog or the driver. I've bought pants for half the Indians in that section. A demon seemed to ride Major, something that was always berserk dwelled in that dog's heart, and his only joy seemed to be to kill. And yet, strange as it sounds, he never made any trouble in the kennels as long as the other dogs let him strictly alone. But he had some queer notions. For example:

It gets cold as the devil in Fairbanks in the winter time, and sometimes those cold spells seem to drop right out of the sky. The thermometer will go scudding down to forty or fifty or sixty below. One night when one of these cold spells hit the town, I went out and put all my dogs inside their kennels, shutting the doors and locking them.

Now my kennels were made with the idea of keeping my dogs warm in just such weather, as well as keeping them in. The doors were of a double thickness of one by twelve inch boards, laid crosswise.

Well, in the morning I went to let them out. There, lying serenely sprawled in the snow on top of his kennel, all happy and contented, was that damned Major. He had gnawed his way through those two inches of solid

wood! And there he was, in fifty-five degree weather, acting like a cat that had licked up the cream. Now what can you do with a fellow like that?

Another thing. He wouldn't stand any familiarity of any kind, from anybody. If I kept on my feet and talked straight business to him, he submitted to the harness with an indifference which was his way of showing that he admitted nothing of lordship over him. He was one of those unfortunate devils, like a lot of humans, that can't stand taking orders, and like all with that kink in their nature, whether animal or human, he raised plenty of hell because of it.

The thing finally narrowed down to a silent battle for supremacy. Neither of us giving an inch, neither asking odds, but willing to fight it out with the brains and the weapons the Lord gave us.

And yet, outside that kink, Major had everything; savvy, trail sense, stamina, and an utter indifference to whether he paced and pulled one hour or fifty.

Could I have trusted him out in front, there would have been a leader that would have made Old Tuesday look to his laurels. But I did not dare give him that much room. It was bad enough when he was at wheel, with only the freedom and space to move in from the sled to his place on the line.

Like some men, he let his own stubborn will keep him in a position of inferiority, when he should have been in the lead.

A year went by. Another winter. No more were my dogs the laughing-stock! One of the racing drivers at

Nome came into the Interior especially to find me and challenge me to a race—to take me down a peg, me and my dogs. The only trouble was some friends of his got to him before I could locate him. Evidently they must have told him something of the time I had made with those dogs. I did everything I could do, offered to race him to Nome and back, to the Iditarod, one mile or a thousand for a purse he should determine. He crawled!

I was offered a thousand dollars for Tip, my leader, when he was a year old, by Mr. Samuels, a banker from Nome, and when I laughed at the offer he told me to set my price on the dog. He had come into the Interior driving what he considered the best dogs in the arctic. We left a certain road-house together. I was at the next stopping place, had my dogs put up and was eating supper when he drove in.

During that winter the battle went on between Major and me. He attacked mushers and dogs, and once, when I slipped and fell beside him, he did his best to kill me.

My brother fell on his hands and knees with his rear facing Major. He didn't sit down for a month. But I'll say this, Major made him get to his feet faster than he ever got up before. It was so funny that I laughed, which set him crazy. He has a temper somewhat like mine, and I had to lick him to keep him from killing Major. From that day on I never trusted the two together.

One day, at Esther Creek, being in a hurry, I forgot

to chain Major! Fortunately I was just coming out of the door when I heard a scream. There on the sidewalk was a little girl, and over her, Major. I just got there in time to kick him off before he killed her. She was the daughter of a friend of mine, and I was shaken to the depths. I went over her little body thoroughly to see if she had been hurt, then I took her to her people.

The words her father used about my dog I shan't soon forget, and I made up my mind that a showdown was long past due. I had showered that dog with kindness, and now, by the old Harry, he was going to find out who was running the outfit! Either he'd admit I was the boss, or, well—have you ever seen a Dane when he is coldly angry? That's the way I was, and I didn't give a damn about principles.

I got a heavy dog-chain and stood in front of Major, holding it. He stared unwinkingly at me. He knew, too, that the time had come.

I unsnapped him out of the team, with never a move from him, not a growl nor a fang showing. Even in my anger I had sense enough to take him to a secluded place for I didn't want the rest of the dogs to know. It would simply have ruined their morale. So I led Major off behind a barn where there was a heavy wood sled to which I chained him.

"Now, Major," I said to him, "I'm going to tell you something. The time has come for you to understand who is boss of this outfit. You're either going to acknowledge the fact, or I'm going to kill you. Understand? That's the last human you're ever going to try

to murder. Understand that? You're going to get the beating you should have had months ago—and you're going to get it right!

"Crawl . . . damn you . . . crawl!"

I brought the chain down on his head. Like a shot he hurled his hundred pounds straight at my throat.

And then we had it. I knocked him flat into the snow again and again, only to have him surge to his feet, and with fangs bared, spring at me. If ever a dog wanted to kill a man Major wanted to kill me. Not a sound out of him, not a growl. Just the thud of a chain on flesh, the gleaming hate from eyes all red now, the curl of lips back from wicked fangs, the nasty click of them as he came at me.

Unconquered and unconquerable, he fought in silence, his one desire to break free of the chain that held him, to launch himself through the air and to tear the throat out of me.

For answer I mashed him again. I was crying. He was the first dog I have ever beaten. And I kept it up until I couldn't wield that chain any more, until I had beaten him flat to the ground.

And continuously, between blows, the command, "Crawl, damn you . . . crawl!"

Finally, spent and sick, I sank to the tongue of the sled a few feet from him.

Dripping blood, eyes smoldering, he followed every move.

"Had enough?"

Not a move, not a sound from him.

I put out my hand.

"Come *here! On your belly. . . . Crawl!*"

Not a move. Until I had thrust out my hand at arm's length. Then like a shot from a gun he came, jaws open, snarling. His teeth gnashed shut not an inch from my fingers.

Up I jumped, and once more the only sound was the swish of the chain, the thud of it into flesh, the command over and over: "Crawl, damn you, crawl!"

To which now came his refusal, a low growl deep in his throat. I was spent, but he was ready for more.

What happened?

I simply sat down and cried. Sat there on that sled tongue just beyond reach of his chain, and bellered, while a few feet away, on the red bed of snow, but still unconquered, that devil lay, tensed for another spring——

I talked to him for a half hour; told him why I had to beat him, that if there ever was a next time I'd kill him outright; that I was going to give him just one more chance.

Did he understand? I don't know. But when I got through talking to him, he let me unsnap him without making a move, let me wipe the blood from his eyes.

Now here's the odd thing about the whole episode. I had taken him clear away from my team, around a barn, out of their sight and hearing. I did this so they wouldn't know I had had to punish one of their number. When we came back, every one of my dogs was on his haunches, howling to high heaven! They knew,

knew just what had happened. Now explain that, will you? You folks that think a dog doesn't savvy!

I have never beaten a dog since. I have never since let a man beat a dog in my presence. I never want to come upon a man beating a dog, for if I do, there will come to my mind a picture of a man with a chain in his hand, standing in front of a dog at Esther Creek, I will hear the swish of the chain in the air, the thud of it on flesh, and . . . I'm afraid that someone would get an awful beating, either that dog-pounder or me—for you see I haven't told you all the story of Major. Oh, he never became a good dog; he never acknowledged me his master; he kept his untamed battle spirit to the last—but, well, that battle spirit had a lot to do with my being here to-day, that's all. Sometime I'll tell you that tale.

CHAPTER V

VAGRANCY WARRANTS

Now when I was with the United States Marshal's Office, no provision had been made whereby the men and women who were injured or frozen on the trails, could be rescued and hurried to a place where, through medical aid, their lives might be saved.

In Yukon Territory, just across the line, the utmost care was taken by the Government, through the agency of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, to protect human life. And the same was true in Canada. But not so in Alaska. A man was absolutely on his own. He lived or he died, according to his ability to fight his own battles against the climate and all the forces which the land seems ever ready to use in its efforts to kill him.

But with the advent of Henry K. Love, as Marshal of the Fourth District, all this changed. And I want to say here and now that Alaska, yes, and the Government of the United States, are greatly indebted to this man; this man who took his work seriously, and who was loved and respected by all the men under him or associated with him.

But perhaps the one or two little incidents I shall relate here may give the reader some idea of what a

public spirited, honest, and honorable man may do when given a position that offers him an opportunity to serve his fellow man.

To enable you to get some idea of the scope of our work, it might be as well to picture roughly the immensity of the territory under Marshal Love's jurisdiction. The Fourth District of Alaska included all the territory bounded as follows: On the west, roughly, a line from the Arctic coast at the mouth of the Sagavanliktok River, southwesterly across the Endicott Range, thence following the divide that separated the drainage system of the Koyukuk from that of the rivers flowing into Bering Sea, thence southwesterly, crossing the Yukon near Starik, which lies almost on the 162nd meridian, and on to a point on the Kuskoquim River just above where the Kuskoquim empties into Kuskoquim Bay. From this point it extends east, following the divide that marks the south boundary of the Kuskoquim drainage system, thence on east along the divide of the Alaskan Range—the line running south of the Mt. McKinley National Park, thence along the backbone of the main range until it meets the international boundary line at a point where Ladue River crosses the international boundary. The eastern boundary is, of course, the international boundary line between Alaska and Yukon Territory.

If you will compare this district with the total area of Alaska you will see that the district comprises practically half the area of Alaska. It takes in all of the Yukon basin, all of the Kuskoquim, holds within it,

practically all the mining area, all, in fact, save that immediately around Juneau and around Nome.

In addition, over half of the territory within its borders is absolutely unknown and in the main even unexplored. Within its boundaries lies the worst part of Alaska as regards climate, trails and living conditions. There are sections, larger than many States, where no white man has ever been, at least none has returned to tell the tale.

At the time I was with the Office, the Fourth District held the largest part of Alaska's population. All up and down the Yukon, in every section along its hundreds of tributaries and their hundreds of tributaries were towns, camps, or perhaps lonely cabins of lone prospectors, tucked away in the hills, facing the rigors of a winter that showed a thermometer sixty degrees and more below zero. And all about them the many menaces of Alaska—the blizzards, the treacherous overflow of stream or shallow lake, always the danger of a scarcity of food, the slow, painful death by starvation.

And on the trails all dangers multiplied. An unwary step, a moment of relaxation from that conscious guarding against danger which becomes subconscious with an Alaskan and then, disaster! No help within miles, no one to whom to turn, and the finale, a little mound of white in a great sea of silence—the end of the trail!

One more sour-dough has gone to his long sleep; one more cheechako has paid the penalty of his ignorance of the country, one more victory has been won by the

Storm Gods over the men who would wrest the wealth from Alaskan creeks!

Shortly after my appointment as Deputy Marshal and trailman, there was an incident which brought forcibly to our office the fact that there was no government provision whereby we could do anything to save the lives of those people who had become injured throughout our district. Perhaps it might be well for me to explain here briefly my own official duties.

I was a Deputy Marshal, and my job was that of trailman. I was sent out to serve warrants, or subpoenas, to seize and transport prisoners, or the insane, and to search for the bodies of those who had died or had been killed under conditions that called for official investigation.

During the years I was a Deputy, I traveled over sixty thousand miles behind dog teams. There is not a trail in the Interior from Fairbanks to Dawson, or to Nome, to Bettles, or to Wiseman, in fact, to every Alaskan settlement, that I have not been over time and time again. I think I am one of the few men who ever crossed the Endicott Range and on into the arctic and returned to tell about it.

Of course to do the work I did, I had to have the best dogs it was possible for money to buy. I think—but their records speak for themselves.

As I have said the Royal Northwest Mounted Police in Canada regularly went out on all kinds of rescue missions, yet we were helpless to aid our own people. This condition was intolerable to Marshal Love and finally he dug out of the Code of Laws of Alaska a sec-

tion under which we were authorized to arrest on vagrancy warrants and return persons to Headquarters in the custody of a duly Deputized Marshal. By making use of this provision of the law we were able to rescue many people who otherwise would have died on the trails, to bring them to Fairbanks and the hospital where often their lives were saved.

Of course they were officially recorded as "vagrants," and so some of the most prominent men in the country thus came in the vagrancy class.

I shall never forget the mushes I made under such authority. For all of them were forced mushes, a race against time, with perhaps moments even counting—mushes that demanded of myself and my dogs the ultimate utmost of our strength and stamina.

Looking back on it one realizes the incongruity of the whole procedure. The fact that we had to swear out a vagrancy warrant and arrest some poor devil whose only crime was to have become a victim of the country. To put an Alaskan down on the official records as a vagrant was the worst possible insult. He stands on his own feet, broke or lousy with gold; fights his own battles without asking aught of his fellow man but a fair deal and an equal chance, stakes his life gladly and without a second thought to help a fellow man in trouble, paying his way as he goes, if he is flush, taking what he needs from the other if he is broke, but always paying back the loan the first time he finds himself with the money to do so.

To arrest such a man as a vagrant was not only an

insult, it was ludicrous! But it was the one way to a rescue.

My first mush under such a warrant was for a man named Meyers who had fallen into an overflow on one of the Minto Lakes. Meyers was a trapper who had a little cabin in the Minto Lake country. One day, when following his far flung trap lines he walked into an overflow. The thermometer registered at the time fifty-five degrees below zero.

Both feet wet, six miles or more from his cabin, his hands so cold he could not light a match, realizing immediately—being an old-timer in the country—that he was in serious danger, that he would never be able to make it to his cabin, he set out on a run for the Minto Telegraph Station, a mile and a half distant.

In a few minutes there was no feeling whatever in his feet, it seemed impossible to lift them, and the least little obstruction threw him flat on the trail. Staggering, falling, clawing himself upright and staggering on again, he struggled toward his goal, still almost a mile away.

Some time later Chester Spencer, the operator at Minto Telegraph Station, heard the door open, heard a sound as of some one pounding two two-by-fours down violently on the floor. He looked up. As soon as he saw Meyers he knew what had happened. Only one thing can make a man's feet sound like that—to be frozen solid.

With the aid of his assistant, Spencer got Meyers into the office. Then he telegraphed to his Lieutenant, at

Fairbanks, advising him of Meyers' condition and asking what he should do. This telegram was referred to our office. Our office got in touch with Dr. Castle who advised that the man's feet be immersed in coal-oil at the temperature of the room. This advice was immediately telegraphed to Spencer at Minto, and in a little while back came his answer: "Impossible with but one man to subdue Meyers sufficiently to force feet into oil. Feet frozen solid. Advise.—Spencer."

The pain of this treatment is excruciating. Men fight it!

"Here's one of those things," Marshal Love said, waving the telegram, "for which no provision has been made by the Government. But by the Gods, I'll find a way to save that man's life. Hansen, hitch up your dogs, then find Commissioner Dillon. Tell him I will personally swear out a vagrancy warrant against this man Meyers. Then you take the warrant and go get him as fast as God'll let you!"

By the time these things were done it was six P.M. The thermometer on the Court-house registered just fifty-five below zero, as, with my first vagrancy warrant tucked safely away, I yelled "Mush!" to my dogs and started on a mad dash down Cushman Street on my way after Meyers.

Minto Telegraph Station is about sixty miles from Fairbanks by the overland trail. I drove all night, and talk about cold! I felt that I was frozen solid when I drove up to the little telegraph station, tied my dogs, and went inside.

There on the floor, all doubled up, and howling to high heaven from the pain of his frozen feet, was Meyers. With the help of Spencer I got him to the sled, laid him amongst the pillows and wrapped him in my heavy wolf robe.

As I was ready to leave Spencer said to me, "Hansen, do me a favor, will you?"

"Sure!"

"Listen, I've been in this hole for three months. I want to go into town. If you'll let me wire my Lieutenant that you need my assistance, I can go."

"Sure!" I said. "Good-by."

Then I was back at my sled, had my dogs strung out on our mad race back to Fairbanks. I didn't wait for Spencer. I couldn't!

The thermometer had dropped to sixty below, the trail was terrible, and all in all, that was an awful trip. I was from eight o'clock in the morning until midnight that night getting back to Fairbanks.

And all through those long hours Meyers screamed and howled from the pain of his frozen feet until finally he could only grunt!

I drove up Front Street to the hospital, which had been notified of my coming by telephone from Esther Creek. The doctors and nurses were waiting. The gates and the doors of the hospital were thrown wide open and they called to me,

"Drive right in!"

And I did—right into the main hall of the hospital we went, dogs, sled and all.

Within fifteen minutes Meyers was under the anesthetic, and they were operating. He lost both feet, but we saved his life.

Years afterward, I met Chester Spencer in Seattle.

"Say, Hansen," he said, "I've got something I want to show you. Come up to my room."

He went to his trunk and took from it a small case. Opening it, he thrust it out at me. "Look," he said, "see what the Government gave me for what you did!"

And there in its little velvet nest was a Distinguished Service Medal, given to Spencer for saving the life of Meyers at Minto Telegraph Station.

But any way I made him buy the drinks.

Once I arrested a woman on a vagrancy warrant! She, her husband and his partner, all old sour-doughs, had set out from Paxton's Roadhouse on the Fairbanks-Valdez Trail (now the Richardson Trail), and were caught in a storm on the summit of the Alaskan Range. A bad place for a battle with the elements.

They were traveling with a horse and a double-ender (a sleigh of which the front and back are the same), and as they approached the summit a terrific storm came up and the thermometer dropped to forty below zero. They struggled on toward Yost's, which is the Summit Road House, a small log cabin with barns, set against the hillside in the canyon of the Little Delta River just North of the divide.

If these three old sour-doughs had not tried to use their own judgment, but had had faith in the instinct of the horse, they would be alive to-day.

Yost's was completely snowed under, cabin, barns, and all, entirely covered with snow and drifted in. The horse, with a keen scent for smoke and with the smell of the stables in his nostrils, took them to Yost's, walked over the roof of the cabin and stopped at a point right above the stables. There was evidence to show that they had forced him on, that he had again swung back to Yost's and again stopped, only to be driven on again. If they had only understood.

No one knows, of course, just what happened, but the above facts were plainly to be deducted from the silent evidence of the tracks in the snow.

They drove on and on. Then . . . morning came!

The middle of that afternoon a man's body was found lying in an overflow of the Little Delta River about a mile below the road house. That evening, after the storm had blown itself out, mushers and the stage came over the trail from Paxton's to Yost's and asked about the outfit. Yost knew nothing of them. An hour afterward the musher who had found the man's body lying in the river arrived at Yost's with the news of the find. The body was identified as that of one of the men who had been in the sleigh.

A party was then formed to go in search for the other man and the woman. They found the body of the man a mile or two farther down the river. No sign of the horse, sled or woman.

Once again our office was notified and our help asked. Again Marshal Love swore out a vagrancy warrant. And again I was ordered to the trails. With only a stop

now and then for a cup of coffee, I drove my dogs one hundred and thirty-six miles, to the Rapid's Road-House.

In the meantime the searching party had found the horse and sleigh, the horse dead, the sleigh overturned, and, under it, in the robes, the woman. Her hands, one foot, and one-half her face frozen. They had brought her to the Rapid's Road House. I wrapped her carefully in my big wolf robe, and we laid her gently down amongst the pillows I had brought with me. She could not speak, but I shall never forget the smile she gave us. Another cup of coffee and we started on our return journey to Fairbanks.

The road-houses, having been notified by wire, were all awaiting us with warm food and hot coffee for me . . . raw meat for my dogs and hot broth and tea for the woman. (Dogs can be given raw meat while traveling on forced mushes without injury. Any cooked food would make them sick and they would be unable to travel.)

Although she must have suffered terribly during all those long hours, never did she fail to smile her thanks to those sympathetic, kindly souls who ministered to her.

I don't know how it is on the outside, but in Alaska women, without complaint, go through the hardships and suffering that makes babies of the huskiest men. But this woman was the pluckiest of them all!

At Billy Munson's, the Salchaket Road House, forty-two miles from Fairbanks, where we gave her broth and

tea, I and my dogs were pretty much all in. We had been on the trail forty-eight hours without rest.

"Bert, that's the best damned mush that was ever made, and you're going to save her," said Billy Munson as we wrapped the woman in the robe again, and were off, the snow flying from the runners as the dogs surged down the trail.

I've often wondered if dogs understand. Mine were worn out. They had already done the impossible. I can see them now: Tuesday, veteran of the trails, Tip, Sox, Brownie, Monkey, Sunday and Major—even that devil seemed to understand—panting, the steam from their breath hanging about their heads like a silvery veil, surging into their collars, digging their toes into the frozen snow of the trail, bending every effort to keep the pace they had maintained all those long, heart-breaking hours.

At the thirty mile road-house, thirty miles from Fairbanks that is, the Signal Corps men were waiting beside the trail.

"Can we do anything?" they called as we raced past. "Any word we can wire?"

"Tell Fairbanks we'll be there in four hours," I called back.

Mother Johnson's road-house was the next stop on the trail. It is eighteen miles out of Fairbanks. As we came up the trail she threw the doors wide open, and called, "Drive right in!"

Into the dining room we went, dogs, sled, and all. She waved me aside as I went to unwrap the robes.

"You set down! There's a pot of coffee. I'll tend to her!"

With a bowl of broth in one hand, she gently lifted back the robe with the other. Then I heard a moan . . .

Mother Johnson had straightened up and the tears were in her eyes. Softly she laid the robe back. "Bert," she said, "she doesn't need any broth."

Her earthly journey and my record mush were over.

There was still a smile upon her face, the smile with which she had greeted us during all those long, pain-filled hours on the trail. God—I—I—

Just eighteen more miles and I might have saved her!

CHAPTER VI

QUEER DUCKS

IT takes a Northman to survive the North. Not only the cold—the actual physical fact of freezing in some ice-bound cavern underneath Alaska's ice-bound rivers—but the terrible, silent menace of it, the soundless days without end, when the thought of being the only human in some vast stretch of its white wastes, is too terrifying a thought for one companion-loving human to carry, and keep his mental balance!

For it makes a man realize, completely, his transient littleness . . . against the Eternal Immensity of that All-power we call God!

Taken in small doses, it is guaranteed to reduce man's ego, but in big doses, the human soul runs amuck with fright!

Because Alaskans know this, and the danger to every man jack of them, they have a tolerance for the insane man. He is given a second chance, for Alaskan madness is more often than not merely an overdose of the country in its loneliest manifestations, and can be righted by a return to normal human contacts and milder climate.

It was one of my duties to bring in these unfortunates from the solitary wilds, and put them aboard the first steamer to Portland. I will not distress you with

many of these unhappy journeys, but I want to recount a few that had peculiar circumstances—some tragic, some humorous. Going back to what I said about a Northman surviving in the North, I mean by Northmen those whose forefathers were of a Viking strain, who were cradled in the arms of a Glacier. For the true Northman makes ice banks his couch, and the cold that congeals another man's heart is wine in his veins! That's why I say that Amundsen is probably roosting out there in the arctic right now on a piece of ice as big as your hat! Lost? Not that guy! He's probably as much at home as a Polar Bear!

There were two brothers mining in the Iditarod. One of them struck pay dirt, and became wealthy overnight. The other, a great big husky chap, went violently insane. The rich brother had that new pride which comes with wealth and reputation, and having the money to protect it, he decided to take his unfortunate brother out of the country himself, get him to the States, and place him in some private institution pending possible recovery.

Well, they started out all right, with a friend to help handle the insane man, but they had a dog team journey of eight hundred miles to Fairbanks, a stage to Valdez, and then a boat and so out. They had not been on the trail long when the rich brother found that his pride had wished on him an impossible task. The crazy man wrecked every road-house from Iditarod to Nulato, and the rich brother's "poke" dwindled fast from paying damages!

At Nulato he staged a stem winder, wrecked everything in sight, almost killed his brother and the helper, but was finally overpowered, by men who had been called in by a road-house proprietor, and placed in the Nulato Jail. The next morning his brother swore out a warrant against him, and here I break into the story.

I was coming into Fairbanks with two prisoners, a soldier and an insane man. I had both these men on my sled; the soldier, who had his ankle broken in some drunken brawl, and the insane man, a quiet, inoffensive fellow that gave me never a minute's trouble. My orders were to stop at Nulato, pick up the rich man's crazy brother, and bring him to Fairbanks with me, where he would be kept under observation and then brought before a jury and tried for insanity.

Well, I want to tell you that I had a sweet time, for this fellow was a wild, big brute of a man. I shackled him, both legs and arms and with the help of the jailer got him on my sled. Of course, shackled as he was, I felt no anxiety about being able to handle him. Everything went fine and the weather remained warm until we got to the little town of Tofty, about forty miles above Tanana. Then the weather, which had been about ten below, decided to step into the game and the thermometer went sliding down to forty.

Now at that temperature it is impossible to keep a man shackled. The irons bite into the flesh like red-hot bands, and, if not taken off, will soon freeze the flesh to the bone.

An officer has no excuse, save where it is a case of

absolute necessity, for manhandling an insane man, or for placing his life in jeopardy. If I had turned up in Fairbanks with that man's hands and feet in such a condition that they had to be amputated, well, I might get by the law, but public opinion would have condemned me forever.

I tried to avoid taking that fellow's irons off by wrapping the blankets around him. It was a job, for there I was with three men in that thirteen foot sled, with the crazy nut throwing off those robes faster than I could put them back. Finally I got sore.

"Then go ahead and freeze, damn you," I said.

And I mushed up the trail, because I want to tell you right here, that when I took a look into that fellow's eyes, I didn't like the idea of turning him loose from the irons. Well, I had a wild man on my hands and no mistake, when I reached Hot Springs, a hundred and one miles out of Fairbanks. For once in my life I wired the office for assistance.

Al Garner happened to be in town and Marshal Love deputized him to come on out and assist me with my prisoners. We met a few miles above Tolovana, seventy-five miles from Fairbanks. The thermometer was still hanging below forty, and my man was howling and cursing, shaking his manacled fists at me, and sure threatening to kill me!

When Al caught up with me, we looked this fellow over and found that white rings were beginning to show on his wrists. There was nothing for it but to remove the irons and take a chance. So Garner took the other

two prisoners in his sled, while I followed with this man, now unshackled.

When we reached the Ohio Road House, twenty-eight miles from Fairbanks, it was fifty-two below zero. We decided to stop with George Morgan and his wife, who ran the road-house, overnight. We got the soldier to his bunk, the other insane man to his, and Al and I were maneuvering around to get at least the leg shackles back on this chap, when into the room walked Mrs. Morgan.

And then, believe me, the fireworks began.

That fellow made a dive for Mrs. Morgan; Al and I dived for him; and then came Morgan, threatening to brain the fellow if he touched his wife. Screaming bloody murder, Mrs. Morgan ran from corner to corner, trying to keep out of the fracas. I yelled to her to get to the door and out, but the poor woman was too frightened to know what she was doing. Well, the table went one way, chairs another, and from time to time, out of the mass went, headlong, one or the other of us three. Talk about strength! Lord, he wasn't long in proving that he was going to lick hell out of all of us!

So, after he had hit me a clout that made me see stars, and slammed me with a bang up against the hot stove, I decided that the next would be mine!

Through the shooting stars I saw that Morgan was *bors de combat*, and that Al was trying to fight this guy all alone, and getting the worst of it.

Beside me lay a four foot, three-quarter inch Yukon stove-poker. I came up with that shillalah in my hand.

"My God, don't hit him with that! You'll kill him!" Garner yelled. But he was too late. I let the fellow have it, right over the head, and he dropped like a pole-axed beef.

The first thing I did was to put the leg irons and the wrist shackles on him. Then I took a look at the poker. It was bent in an arc, the shape of the top of his head.

Al said, "Bert, you've killed him!"

"I don't give a damn if I have. It was him or us!"

Well, we put him in a bunk, worked over him an hour and finally brought him to. All night he lay there, holding his manacled hands to his head. Boy, he had a welt along his skull that was a darb.

But we never had a bit more trouble from him all the rest of the way in. He simply sat in the sled and held his head. When we got to Fairbanks I helped him out of the sled, propelled him into the jail and with the help of the jailer, put him in the padded cell. He sat down on the stool and just sat, hands to his sore head. You bet, I knew it was sore.

The jailer went to look at him every hour or so all that afternoon and night. About one o'clock in the morning when the jailer made his call, the fellow looked up, glanced around at the padded cell, and said, "What am I doing here?"

Well, they watched him for ten days, during which time he never made a move out of the way. Then he went before the jury and the commissioner, and answered every question they put to him, rationally. The Government doctor, who had watched him, and

taken care of his wound, testified that the man seemed to be rational, so they turned him loose. He owes his freedom to that poker! I had knocked him sane!

Which just goes to show that you never can tell. Take the case of a Greek wood-cutter who had a camp about eighty miles down the Chena River.

This was in 1910. Perhaps you remember that was the year of the Olympic Games? Well, this nut went off his head with the idea he was a Marathon runner. When some one found him, and got word to our office, and I got out to his cabin, he had been running three weeks. Yes sir, three weeks, round and round that cabin of his, which was about twelve by sixteen feet. Talk about your ring around the rosies—that bird was sure doing it. Round and round, clad in shirt, overalls, and hip gum-boots. I don't say that he never stopped; he must have; for not even a nut could, for three weeks, keep up the pace he was setting when I got there. But if he did, he certainly never stopped while I was there.

The sucker had worn a path all of twelve inches deep in the sandy loam—and in those hip boots, mind you!

This was in the late summer and I had gone down after him in a poling-boat. I watched him run for a while, trying to decide what to do, then I walked up beside the path and, as he came around I made a grab for him. I'm pretty husky, but to him it was just like brushing off a fly, and I tumbled head over heels for about ten feet. I tried it again and again, every time he came around. Then I got sore, and took out after him,

ran until I was out of wind, and finally sat there on my rear end, where he had last thrown me.

Well—I was alone, you know—I sat there for all of three hours, watching him, trying to figure what the hell I could do. I had to get him in my boat and back to Fairbanks.

Finally I got an idea. I hunted around back of his place until I found an empty tin can. It was still bright and shiny when I peeled off the label.

As he came round the next time I held the can up so the sun would shine on it, and where he'd have to look straight at it as he ran toward me, and I shouted, "You've won!"

Well, by golly, he stopped and snatched at the can! But before he come to, you can bet I snapped the irons on him.

He fondled that can all the way to Fairbanks and was as peaceable as a baby. But you should have seen his feet. They had to cut the boots off of them. Poor devil!

Did I ever tell you about Dan O'Leary? I don't have to mention his nationality. He came by the name rightly, and was known throughout all Interior Alaska for his quick tongue and his smart way of dodging work.

He had the life habits of a gentleman of leisure, and I always thought, some of the learning as well. Yet he was a bum—though not a common bum. You had to grant him that. One winter Dan hung out in Iditarod,

some eight hundred miles from Fairbanks, and three hundred above the junction of the Iditarod River with the Yukon. Iditarod was the distributing point for the Iditarod Placer Diggings, and had recently come into prominence, and was having more or less of a boom. O'Leary went there full of hope that it would be a snug berth for the winter—men coming and going, money rolling in and out of pockets uncounted; a spirit of revelry, that always comes, despite the hardships and bitter disappointments, during a gold strike, big or little. Men would treat for a good laugh, and Dan O'Leary could make men laugh!

So he went to Iditarod. Well, maybe things didn't pan out as he expected, or maybe he just got tired of panhandling, anyway, I can't say why he did what he did.

One morning the inhabitants came upon Dan sitting elegantly upon the snow-packed wooden sidewalk in front of Ramps Peterson's saloon. Elegantly, I say, because Dan was always the polished gentleman—even when he sat in the gutter. Ramps passed him and spoke.

"Mornin', Dan," he said, but Dan gave no sign of having heard. Ramps shook his head, and put it down as one of Dan's funny jokes, for he was always pulling something to get on the laugh side of Ramps—and, a drink!

All morning Dan sat there, with never a word. Ramps took a look at him once or twice, and sometimes a visitor to the saloon would speak to him, but Dan O'Leary never moved nor spoke the whole morning.

"The darn fool'll freeze to death," said some one.

"Huh! Looks like he's froze already! What the hell ails him, Ramps?"

"Darned if I know. Been sittin' there all mornin'."

"Well, for God sakes, don't be so damn stingy! Go and give the poor nut a drink! I'll bet that'll bring him to!"

"Yeah! I'll bet that's just what he's figuring on me doin'—bringin' him a drink! Well, put this in your pipe right now! If I do give him a drink, it won't be the first one, but I'll be damned if I'm goin' to carry it to him! He's got to want his drink bad enough to come get it."

Soon some one held up a hand.

"Listen! That poor boob's talkin' to himself!"

He was. A dreary mumble broken now and then, by a sob.

"For God sakes, the poor nut's loco!"

"Loco your foot! He's just got a hang-over."

The mumble became a steady monotone, the kind that gets on a man's nerve with the sameness of it. Ramps Peterson stood it all day, but toward evening it got him and he went out and shook Dan O'Leary's shoulder.

"Stop it! This fool joke's gone far enough. Dammit, Dan, if you'll drink it I'll bring it to you!"

But there was no response, no enthusiastic acquiescence.

Leaving the place in charge of the bar-keep, Ramps went up-street.

"Say, go take a look at old Dan! I don't know what's the matter with him."

Storekeepers left their stores and joined the crowd that soon collected. Little groups stood off, looking at the poor fellow; others went nearer, shaking his shoulder. Once more Ramps went up to him.

"Come on, Dan, have a drink. You'll feel better!" But Dan O'Leary's mumble did not cease.

"Aw, come on, Dan." Ramps tried to pull him up-right.

"Let me alone! Let me alone! I'm going crazy!"

Nervous laughter. Was it a joke, or was he really going mad? And what a boob he was making out of Ramps!

"Goin' crazy are you, you Irish monkey!" said the saloon keeper. "Well, go then, and be damned!" And he went back to his bar.

O'Leary mumbled on. Twilight fell, that quiet time—sort of a breathing space that comes between day-life and night-life. The after-supper gang began filling the saloon. For a while they made sport of the lonely figure, but after a time it began to get to them, too, as it had to Ramps.

"Oh, for God's sake, go bring the poor jackass in here and fill him up!"

"Go get him yourself!" from Ramps.

"Will the house stand the treat?"

"That's all I've heard all day. Dammit, I'll put a barrel-full down him, if that'll make you guys feel any better!"

They went out to him.

"C'mon in, Dan! There's a barrel-full waiting for you."

"Not going. Don't want a drink."

"You don't! Well, for—say, maybe the poor nut *is* crazy!"

"Been trying to tell you all day . . . crazy . . . crazy . . . 'course I'm crazy . . . turn down a drink . . . 'course I'm crazy—"

They looked at him, at each other, silently speculating. Dan O'Leary spoke again.

"Going crazy . . . crazy . . . get the Marshal. Want the Marshal . . . Marshal that takes care crazy men . . . crazy . . . crazy . . . don't want drink . . . crazy . . . crazy . . ."

Somebody laughed. It was a big Swede.

"By Golly, aye tank you better go bring da Marshal! Aye tank Dan's crazy sure 'nough. Aye tank any man's crazy to turn down a free drink, by Golly!"

So they brought the marshal.

In the meantime the Swede was busy taking bets on whether Dan was off his nut.

The Marshal said to O'Leary, "What's the matter, Dan?"

"Crazy."

"Aw, shucks! You're all right, old man. C'mon, have a drink. You'll feel better."

"Crazy."

"Aye tank he bane tell the trut, all right. By Golly, I bet another twenty!"

“Well, he can’t sit here all night, crazy or not crazy. He’ll freeze. I’ll lock him up,” said the Marshal.

O’Leary made no protest. Passively he shambled along so nearly frozen stiff from cold it took two men to hold him upright. He was put into the spruce-log jail and left. It was now about midnight and Iditarod, having disposed of Dan O’Leary, settled down to sleep.

But no one slept.

Dan made the night hideous with his yowls. Not one second of the time between then and morning did he let up. He refused breakfast and continued to howl, although by then his vocal cords were wearing out, and the sound he made was strangled and hoarse—but continuous!

The Marshall came to a decision.

“By God, poor old Dan’s sure bug-house! Did you ever know a man to have such a voice on him? I’d better notify the Commissioner.”

The Commissioner went to the jail and took one look at O’Leary. One was enough.

“I’d better round up a jury,” said he. For it is by jury trial that a man is adjudged insane in Alaska—six of a man’s peers.

They put O’Leary on the stand. Men stood beside him, armed, ready to seize him and bind him should he become violent. Between questions he howled to high heaven and insisted over and over he was crazy.

“Say, don’t you know you’re convicting yourself every time you say that, Dan?” asked the Commissioner.

"Sure I know it! Phwat d'ye think I'm here for? I'm crazy!"

And so they turned in a verdict of "insane" though he had done no harm to any man.

And this is where I come into the story.

Our office was notified, and I was sent to get Dan O'Leary, eight hundred miles away. It seems to me all my trips were made in bad weather. Now it began to snow the minute I got my orders, and the thermometer went skidding down right afterward.

The whole town gathered to bid Dan good-by. They liked him, and they saw in him an example of the insidious menace that Alaska held for them all. More than one man must have thought, "Well, there goes old Dan. I wonder who's next?"

Of course it's always a matter of speculation how a crazy man is going to act. Sometimes he goes peaceably at first, sometimes he shows fight at the start. Dan followed me all right. But when we got to my outfit, he stopped and looked at it. I knew he was going to pull something.

"I've heard of your outfit, Marshal," he said.

Well, I wondered what he had against my dogs, and I expected him to refuse to travel with them, but instead he went over to the sled, climbed in, and wrapped himself all snug and comfy in my fur robe. I watched him in amazement.

"Confound you! Where d'you get the idea you're going to ride," I said to myself, but I humored him for the start.

Then Dan asks, very haughty and dignified, "Marshal, how soon can you get me into Fairbanks?"

Still keeping on his soft side, I said, "Are you in a terrible hurry, Dan?"

"Sure. But it isn't so much the hurry I'm in, as the curiosity I have to see if you deserve your reputation as a wonderful musher, and the owner of the fastest dog team in Alaska! Put on a little speed now, for 'tis a fast trip I'm after having, me boy!"

This was a laugh at my expense, but I took it. Crazy as the poor fellow was, his habit of chaffing still stayed with him. Something made me look again at the papers I had on him. Yes, they were in order all right. Then I took a look at Dan, sitting there all snug, waiting to ride—to ride—by God, and me to walk!

"Dan," I said, "you're as crazy as a fox!"

"Sure. I know it! Better men than you have said it. Crazy . . . crazy . . . well, come on, me lad, let's mush. Show me your speed!"

Again there was laughter at my expense.

"By cracky! We'll mush all right! You've asked for it, and you're going to get it! Tues! Major! You Monkey, Red, Brownie, Snap into it! Mush!"

I've told you how I always sang to my dogs—pepped up their spirits by starting off with a wild, exultant song? This time O'Leary helped me out. Raising that crazy voice of his, he howled to the sky, while the dogs leaped ahead as though they'd been hit with a hot biscuit.

Well, we made what you might call a motion-picture

exit all right. I'll bet Dan O'Leary got his wish, and a few thrills beside, for the dogs didn't settle down for a mile, and I didn't try to make them. Then I stopped.

"Get out, Dan," I commanded. "You don't rate any Pullman berth."

He looked up at me, and a cunning glare flashed from his eyes. But not a move did he make, nor a word did he speak. I got impatient.

"Here, get out of that!"

No response—just that foxy glare.

I could not make him move, and as I had no authority to manhandle him unless he got dangerous, he rode all the way. It tickled him too. He would stop raving, look at me slyly and chuckle. And in his rational moments, he entertained me with tales of the old country—things maybe he wouldn't have told me otherwise. He must have been what is called a white collar guy over there. Once he stopped and shook his head. He thought a moment, then went on:

"Some of them will feel bad, hearing how Dan O'Leary had to be sent to the crazy-house. In truth now, Hansen, 'tis a disgrace at that!"

People along the way who had known him came out to see poor old Dan on his way to the Insane Asylum. It seemed to give Dan no end of pleasure to point at me, mushing, and at himself, riding. At first I humored him, for at that, a man on his way to the Insane Asylum hasn't much joy to expect out of life.

Then it began to get me sore, for he insisted on stopping at every dwelling, every road-house, every place

there was chance of seeing somebody to whom he could say:

"Look at him! The fastest musher in Alaska. Marshal Hansen, if you please. He walks and I ride . . . poor, crazy Dan O'Leary rides and the officer walks! Egad, but that's a turn of affairs for you!"

I had to endure this for eight hundred miles. The people along the way, well-known to me, picked it up, and joshed me, glad of the chance to get my goat. Believe me, I pushed my dogs to the limit. Oh, he got a fast ride all right, not because he wanted it, but because I was anxious to cut it short for my own sake.

Well, the news traveled as soon as we struck telegraph wires, and half the town of Fairbanks was out to see Marshal Hansen mushing in, driving his crazy man de luxe, snug as a bug in a rug, and him making a laughing-stock of a United States officer!

As usual my dogs went wild when they came within smell of home. We streaked down Cushman Street like the old boy himself was after us, and people on foot beat a hasty retreat and gave us the road. The team always came home this way, unless they were completely dead-beat, tails slashing the air, yelping in a way to deafen you, snow scudding up from their feet, a cloud of frozen breath enveloping them. There were two or three hundred people lined up to see us pull in. By the time the dogs stopped Dan had unwrapped himself, and then, with a grand air, he stepped out of the sled, swept off his ragged cap with a flourish and began calling members of the crowd by name.

"How do you do, Mr. Green! How do you do, Mr. Smith . . . and there's Mignon! Charmed to see you, Mr. Smith . . . and what a gra-and reception it is, indeed! All to see Dan O'Leary, even Sweet Marie . . . and if there isn't the future Mrs. Hansen." (I must say here that the man certainly *was* crazy, the woman he referred to being of the type of 'Lady that's known as Lou.') "Sure, and what kind of a trip did I have, you ask me? Ah, pardon me, if there isn't the Judge himself. How do you do, Judge? Fine weather, isn't it? I had the great pleasure of coming before one of your confrères a short time back. A most estimable gentleman, indeed! Ah, as to my trip. A fine trip! A grand trip! Warm as a babe rocked in a cradle . . . swift as the wings of Mercury himself . . . and why wouldn't I, with Marshal Hansen mushing behind me, and his crack team running ahead of me?"

There was a roar of laughter. I felt exactly as I knew many of them were thinking of me—what you would call in these days, "a poor fish!"

"Friends," said O'Leary, with another low bow, "I have been adjudged insane . . . insane . . . by men supposed to be smarter than I am! Look at me . . . riding in fur robes, behind the best musher in Alaska, and tell me who's the crazy one? The man who rides, or the man who walks?"

Another shout of laughter, and a burst of light in my brain that made me want to kill O'Leary on the spot, for now I knew the truth! The man had fooled us all! Crazy? He wasn't any more crazy than I was;

not, as he said himself, as much so! He had made me the laughing-stock of the country-side, and got himself a snug berth for the winter.

I turned angrily to him, but even in that same moment I knew there wasn't anything to do. He had been tried and convicted.

"And now, ladies and gentlemen, bid me bon voyage. Perhaps a little delegation later to see me off on the steamer? Say au revoir, but not good-by, for I shall return. Ah yes, I shall return like the flowers that bloom in the spring, tra la! Marshal Hansen, lead me to my boudoir!"

And return in the spring he did. Nobody blamed old Dan, but they sure had a lot of fun taking it out on me.

CHAPTER VII

MUSHING WITH A DEAD MAN

A DEPUTY MARSHAL in Alaska has a lot of unpleasant things to do, at least if he is the trailsman.

Take Gustafson! He was the first dead man I had ever been sent out to get. It was during the early days of the Iditarod Gold Stampede, in 1909. Gustafson, a Swede, got in a heated argument with a man named Felix Boucher, a Frenchman, over the boundary lines of a mining claim. Gustafson was shot with a rifle, some claimed in the back. The U. S. Commissioner, after a hearing, turned Boucher free, but the Grand Jury indicted him later, and the Fairbanks District Court ordered Gustafson's body exhumed and returned to Fairbanks for autopsy. Boucher swore it was self-defense and that he had shot him in the chest as Gustafson came at him with an ax.

I was on my way back to Fairbanks with a prisoner, Moses by name, when Marshal Love's telegram reached me, ordering me to put Moses in the Tanana jail and to go to the mouth of Otter Creek, exhume Gustafson's body and rush it to Fairbanks.

I got to Otter Creek, a small settlement, and finally located the spot where they had buried him. But do you think I could get any one to help me dig that

fellow out? I should say not. Finally I persuaded a Norwegian, a fellow not much over five feet high, weighing about a hundred and twenty pounds, to help me thaw the ground.

Gustafson was a huge man, six feet two and weighing all of two hundred and twenty pounds. He was frozen stiff as a poker, and had turned black, with traces of mold on his face.

Well, I wrestled with him and finally got a rope under his shoulders and another one under his legs. Then we tried to lift him out. My long legs could straddle the grave, but the Norwegian's couldn't. We'd get Gustafson up about two feet, then we'd have to let him down again.

At last three Irishmen came along the trail and I called on them for help. Do you think they would do it? I threatened and cursed and showed my badge, but they just told me politely to go to hell. Finally, one of them, a young chap, did agree to come over and help pull, but neither he nor the Norwegian would get anywhere near the body.

Well, I rolled Gustafson in a canvas tarpaulin and we finally got him on my sled and lashed down tight. Then I was off for Fairbanks, eight hundred miles away. I had two reasons for hurrying. The trial of Felix Boucher, for the murder of this man, was on; and when Court's in session and wants a bit of evidence, it wants it right away. Add to that the fact that there wasn't a scrap of grub to be had in the little settlement, and you can bet I was for getting out of there. One meal

for my nine dogs cost me fifteen dollars and fifty cents, and the Government only allowed me fifteen dollars a day for my team.

It was in April and the sun glare on the snow was terrible. I made the mush to Dishakaket, a distance of sixty miles, stayed there till noon, and left in blinding sunlight for Nulato. Before I got to Nulato my eyes felt as if they had red-hot pepper in them, and by the time I arrived I was virtually blind.

But I had to go on, so I changed to night travel in order to avoid the light. Well, I want to tell you, it's a thrill to go mushing along through an uninhabited, God-forsaken country at night, with only a dead man for company—especially if he's the first one you ever traveled with.

But I pushed my dogs along and got to a colored mammy's road-house in Tanana early one morning. She was famous all up and down the Yukon for her comfortable house, her good food, and a big, buck negro roustabout, named Mississippi.

As I drove up Mississippi came out to help me kennel the dogs and lift the sled on to the cache. One has to do that in Alaska, to keep the dogs from eating everything on the sled, including the gut sinew with which it is made. And I sure didn't want the dogs to get at Gustafson. You see he was evidence—the sole thing upon which a man's life depended.

Well, I had only mushed seventy miles and I was dead tired, so when Mississippi and I returned to the sled, after kenneling the dogs, I gave the husky black

the heavy end, the head and shoulders, while I took the front end of the sled.

Now the cache was about six feet high, and as Mississippi began to get his end up, the weight of the sled aroused his curiosity.

"Lord a massy, Mr. Hansen," he said. "What you all got in here? Gold dust?"

"Hell no! A dead man!" I said, without thinking. Wham!

Just like that the rear end of that sled hit the ground. Say, have you ever seen a scared nigger run? Well, it was a hundred yards to that road-house and I'll bet that coon made it in less than two seconds, flat. And by golly, I was cursing him all the way.

Well, I had a sled with a broken runner and broken handle bars. And didn't I curse some more! I went right in after that coon, determined to haul him out and make him finish the job. There he was behind the stove, about the color of wood ashes, and shaking like a leaf. I couldn't budge him, no sir!

At last I found another fellow to help me, and this time I took the heavy end. As we were about to lift the sled I thought I noticed something strange about Gustafson. I felt of him, and there sure was something strange. His head was gone!

When that nigger had dropped the sled Gustafson's head had snapped right off, clean as a whistle, and was rolling around inside the canvas tarpaulin.

Maybe you think I didn't have to do some tall explaining when I got back to Fairbanks! They accused

me of attempting to destroy the evidence; and I had to get an affidavit from Mississippi to the fact that he had dropped the "head" end of the sled.

But I had one thing to look back on with pride. Snowblind as I was, I had yet made a record mush of eight hundred miles in ten and a half days over some of the worst country in that part of the Interior. I had traveled seventy-five miles in ten hours and a half the last day. That's what those wonderful bird dogs of mine could do. And the two records they made on that trip stand to-day in Alaska!

CHAPTER VIII

THE SOUR CABIN-DWELLER

FAITH, Hope and Charity should, according to Bible standards, lead somewhere close to Heaven. But Alaska doesn't run to the Bible much. Instead of Heaven, those three creeks led to Old George Loper's cabin.

George Loper was one of those characters who demonstrate what long years on the edge of things can do to a man. His cabin stood where three creeks joined to make the Chatanika River.

Somebody in the earlier days with a sense of humor which seems peculiarly Alaskan had named those three creeks, Faith, Hope and Charity. I'll say this for them: One sure had to have a lot of faith and hope when he started down them in right cold weather, and he deserved charity of a sort that spelled warmth and hot food when he had safely negotiated their length. They were about as treacherous as three creeks for the musher as there were in Alaska.

Now, in Alaska, almost any cabin is given the name of a road-house if it is so situated geographically on the traveler's trails that his journey automatically would bring him to that point at the end of a hard day's mush. In reality road-houses in Alaska are stopping places, maintained by folks for no other purpose than

that of providing shelter and meals for man and dog when on the trail.

A certain charge is made for such accomodation; any musher or traveler is welcome, can stay as long as he can pay, and, if the weather is too bad for him to hit the trail, he would never be turned out even though he hadn't a dime with which to meet his bill.

A dog team will travel about so far a day under ordinary conditions, and at those intervals throughout the most of the known trails of the Interior, you will find these road-houses. Most of them and their owners are known throughout the country and a musher looks forward to each stopping place as he mushes his way along the trails.

On little used trails, or back in the infrequently traveled sections, one can almost always find a cabin of some settler or prospector where he is welcome to stop for the night. A welcome is one of the things you just take for granted in Alaska. Though occasionally you find such a man as this Loper. And when you do you feel like killing him. Anyway that was my emotion the first time I stopped at that little cabin by the three creeks. I knew some one was at home. There was smoke pouring from the chimney, and a man never goes away from his cabin and leaves the fire burning.

I knocked. I knocked again. Not a sound. The next time I damned near beat the door in.

"That'll wake 'em up if they're dead!" I thought.

I heard a shuffling sound inside the cabin, and I was all set to speak my little piece, for though I was boiling

inside I was half frozen outside. Then some one called, "C'mon in!"

I threw the door open and stepped across the threshold. There, sitting in a chair, tilted back, facing the doorway, a gun across his knees, sat the man I later came to know as George Loper. He made no move to get up, and he gave me no welcome.

We glared at each other, wills clashing and battling on the instant; then—

"Shut the door. It's damned cold," he growled. "What do you want?"

I slammed the door. "Got a place I can stay?"

"This ain't no road-house!" He grunted it, never taking his little beady eyes off me.

Well, I looked up and down that big, walrus-mustached, paunch-bellied, old sour-dough, with a cold and hostile eye, and despite the gun across his knees, I had the satisfaction of telling him just what sort of an Alaskan I thought he was—*not!*

As I swung my dogs on down the trail I swore, by the whole tribe of Siwash Gods, that sometime I'd stop overnight in that damned cabin, if I *never* woke up in the morning.

But I was a long time doing it. I made trip after trip past Loper's before I ever got more than a surly, "Ain't runnin' no hotel. Can't no one stop here!" His gun across his lap, all ready for action. Never, in all the years I knew him did I ever find Loper without that gun, never opened his cabin door but it was pointed my way and ready.

But time works wonders and at last Loper and I became the best of friends. I could stop there whenever I came that way, indeed he seemed to enjoy my company. But as to himself he never spoke a word, never gave a reason for the gun or for his inhospitality.

Then came a day when I was given a subpoena to serve on old George. He was called as witness in the trial of a man who had been accused of shooting game out of season. I drove up to his cabin, knocked and at his call, went in. There he sat, chair tilted back against the wall, the gun across his knees. He grunted a word of recognition, waved his hand to me to come in—which was the nearest to an invitation I ever got—and went on puffing away at his pipe.

"George, I've got a summons for you," I said, and drew up a chair beside him. In compliance with the law, I read him the document and then handed it to him.

"There, George," I said. "Now you're summonsed. Be in Fairbanks on the date written here, and report to the Court."

I knew he couldn't read a line, but I waited while he frowned at the paper, holding it upside down. At last, with a flip of his hand, he tossed it to the floor.

"Ain't goin'," he said calmly.

"That's a summons from the Court, George."

"Don't care if 'tis. I ain't goin'."

"Listen, George," I said, trying to explain to him. "If I go back there and tell them that they'll just give me a warrant to come out and get you. I'd hate to have to do that. You must come on in when the time comes."

He turned and faced me, his black, beady eyes boring into mine.

"Ain't goin', I tell you! Now, Hansen, you're a friend of mine and I'd hate to have to kill you. But you tell that there Judge they ain't enough Marshals in the whole of Alaska to make me go into Fairbanks. You just tell him I said I ain't coming."

"Why don't you want to go in?" I asked. "You can't buck the law, George."

He thought a moment, then turned again, facing me.

"Hansen, I like you. You know it for I let you into my place. I don't run no road-house. I don't let nobody stop but you. Fer that reason I don't want to have to kill you. But I'd do it before I'd let you take me to town."

"George," I said, "you don't mean that!"

He rose from his chair, walked to the stove, threw a stick of wood on the fire, and said slowly and emphatically, "I promised myself nigh onto twenty years ago never to go into no town or tradin' post as long as I lived. And I ain't a-goin' to break that promise. Now, I've told you this and I've warned you. You tell that Judge I ain't comin' in."

And he never did.

Yet, I'll say this for Loper. He was not at all a bad fellow. Some one, years before, had injured him, how, or why I never learned. But somewhere in his past there was a man whom he hated with the deadliest hatred. And he must have had reason to think the man was in Alaska, that some day his enemy would do as I had

done, knock at his door, and enter. If he did, there was Old George, his gun loaded and ready. He'd have shot him on the spot, of that I'm certain, just as certain as I am that he would have killed me had the Judge decided his testimony was worth the trouble it would be to bring him in.

And yet he was human, had his tender side, deep crusted as it was beneath a hard exterior. On one of my trips I had my camera and I persuaded George to let me take his picture. That broke the ice and we got to talking. I learned that he was from the Tennessee Mountains, had left home when only a boy.

"Is your mother living, George?" I asked.

"Sure, she's alive!"

"Do you hear from her?"

"Naw, hardly ever. I don't know when I heard last. Ain't seen her for forty year."

"Then how do you know she's alive?"

"Aw, the old lady's alive all right. If she wasn't I'd know it."

"How would you know it?"

But he evaded direct answer. "Aw—I'd know it, all right," was all I could get out of him.

"How old is she, George?"

"Let's see," he figured mentally, brows frowning; "must be somewheres in the nineties, thereabouts."

"George, I'd like to send her your picture. Do you know her address?"

"Sure."

When I got the picture developed, I sent one to

George's mother. Months later I received an answer written on a piece of old wrapping-paper, and in tortured English. Barring the dialect, this is the gist of his mother's letter:

"I thank you for the picture of my baby. It looks just like him. I have not seen him for over forty years, but I'd know him anywhere. What a fine man he has grown, just like his father. I am well, tell George I often think of him. I'll not be long now as I am going past ninety-two. God bless him and you for sending me his likeness. Give my boy my love,

His mother.

When I next went on the trail I took George her letter.

"Yep, that's the old lady's writin'," he said. "I know'd she was still livin'."

And such a man is typical of many whom the North has claimed and taken to her bosom and will in the end hold beneath her soil. Men, like animals, when sorely wounded, run to their burrows and pull the holes in after them. There they ask but to be allowed to nurse their wounds and to die unmolested.

An example of this, better even than George Loper, I ran across once on the trail to Kockrines.

About five o'clock one evening, I arrived at a cabin built in the timber on a point jutting out into the Yukon fifteen miles above Kockrines.

I had mushed some forty miles over trail rough as the devil and my dogs and I were all in. So, when I

saw this cabin, I mushed right up to the door, and knocked. In a moment a man stood framed in the doorway.

"Howdy," I called. "Got a place I can put the dogs?"

This is the universal greeting. One takes for granted one can bunk inside.

"No," he said. "You can't stop here!"

"What!"

He shook his head, still blocking the doorway.

"It's a hell of a trail to Kockrines," I protested, "and we're all in."

"I am not running a road-house," he stated coldly. "No one stops here."

"Well," I said, "I guess I can find some place to sleep. How about the barn?"

"No! That's for my horses! No one stops here."

"What a hell of a fine Alaskan you are!" I shot at him. For answer the door was shut in my face. Venting to the clear air of Alaska my opinion of this inhospitable stranger, I went on toward Kockrines, fifteen miles below. That mush stands out yet as a nightmare—hummock ice, rough going, black night, myself and dogs worn to a frazzle and empty bellied. To make it worse there was a cold wind blowing up the river which bit to the bone.

At Kockrines, still hot under the collar, I told about this fellow and his refusing to let me stop for the night.

"Hell," they said. "You can't stop there. No one can. That old wood-cutter was the first man on this river.

Far as we know, no one ever stopped with him. We all pass him up as if he wasn't there."

"By God, I'll stop with him. I'm going to sleep in that cabin if it takes me years," I said.

"Well, Hansen, you'll have your trouble for your pains. Better forget him!"

It was good advice. But I did as most people do with good advice—ignored it. Every time I mushed up or down the river after that I made it a point to call at that cabin, and I always took that old grouch magazines and papers that I knew he couldn't get and left them with him.

From folks around about I got this much of his history. He had come into Alaska off a whaler early in the nineties, landing at St. Michaels. When the first Northern Commercial boat went up the river in 1892, searching for possible trading-post sites, he was shipped as a wood-cutter. The boat had stopped at this point—where his cabin now stands—and had tied up while the wood crew went ashore to cut fuel. The fuel cut, all but this man clambered back aboard.

He demanded his wages and said that he was going to stay there forever. With supplies purchased from the boat he built himself a cabin. And there he had remained, cutting wood and selling it to the N. C.—his place became one of their regular stops for fuel—and always he demanded cash down, no company checks or orders on the company—gold only. And never, no matter what the excuse, would he allow any one to stop over night in his cabin.

Well, finally, through sheer persistence, I began to get under his hide. He was an educated cuss, he could speak Latin; knew the law better than I did. The inside of his cabin was bare, not a picture to lighten the walls, but scrupulously clean. I knew he enjoyed the magazines and newspapers I brought him, and that he looked forward to my coming.

Ever since my first taste of his particular kind of hospitality I had tried always to get there in the daytime, but I had not been able to make it on this occasion. My dogs were about done, so I let them flop down in the clearing and rest. Meantime my inhospitable host, with the eagerness of the recluse, had torn open the bundle and was looking at the society section of a San Francisco paper.

I stood a moment trying to make up my mind whether to stick it out on the trail, or fight it out with him as to stopping. Finally I came to a decision,

"Alaskan . . . I'm going to stay to-night. I'm all in!"

For a moment there was silence. I looked at him, wondering if he had heard, and when I saw his face I wondered a lot more.

He had a sheet with a lot of those Sunday pretty girl pictures clutched in both hands and he looked like a man who'd seen a ghost.

"Did you hear me? I'm stopping here to-night," I repeated.

He did not answer, but turned and walked into the cabin, leaving the door standing open. I think he was

beyond knowing or caring what I did. Well, I put up my dogs and followed him. Never a word did he say as he got the supper. I couldn't see the paper anywhere, but I soon noticed the picture of a beautiful girl pinned on the wall.

"Well, it looks like you found something in one of those papers you liked!" I said.

"That's my daughter!" he replied.

And then, our pipes lighted, he told me the story. It was a tale that needs no embellishment. A lad in San Francisco, no money, struggling for an education, working at whatever job he could get. Then the inevitable girl, daughter of a wealthy family, their secret marriage, the discovery by her parents and then, coming home to their little apartment one night he found a note. Her parents had picked her up and were taking her to Europe. What did he do? Took the first steamer out of port; which happened to be a whaler bound for the arctic. He learned later that his wife had left her people in Europe, had come back to San Francisco, had tried to find him. That had been years before. And now, here on the wall, was the picture of his daughter.

"Why don't you go back to them?" I asked, when the tale was finished.

"No," he said. "They're a different class. Once I felt I too might belong. But that was years ago. Now they think me dead. And I, I guess it's best as it is."

And thus it is. No one knows how many of those lonely cabins house some such tragedies!

CHAPTER IX

THE TWO-BIT DOG

My dogs had been hard at it almost constantly for months. We had covered thousands of miles, hundreds of them over the worst of trails, and in much bad weather. As a result of this, and of the two or three record-breaking mushes I had been forced to make, which pull the heart right out of a team, I awakened to the fact that unless I wanted to ruin my dogs, I must give them a rest and their feet a chance to heal.

It was necessary therefore that I get new dogs. I hated the idea, for a musher dreads to go out on the trail without a thorough knowledge of the animals upon whose actions his life depends. Nevertheless, I had it to do, and so I spent the next few days around Fairbanks searching for dogs that would measure up to the work I had to get out of them.

Nothing developed and I was about to give up when word came to me that Salmon-Bellied Mike, a chap living seven miles down the Chena River below Fairbanks, had a bunch of dogs to sell. Luck was with me, for Mike had five dogs which I bought at once, including Mike and Jerry, two fine MacKenzie River huskies for each of which I paid a hundred and fifty dollars. He claimed that both dogs were leaders, and as far as Mike was concerned, I found this to be true. In fact, I

later trained Mike to be a loose leader, of which there have been but few in Alaska.

To train a dog to be a loose leader requires an infinite amount of patience. Few dogs have sufficient intelligence to act in such capacity, and when one is once so trained, he is invaluable. A loose leader is a dog that travels outside harness, one that runs on ahead of the team anywhere from fifty to a hundred feet. He encourages the other dogs, is a pace setter, and being out in front, running free, he can make better time than the other dogs. Seeing him out there, every dog in the team strains to his utmost to catch up with him. You can appreciate the value of such an animal where time is a vital element, as it often is in mushing.

A loose leader answers to the call of the driver as if he were in harness; at the command of "Mush!" he will forge on ahead; at command of "Whoa!" he will stop; if you call "Gee" or "Haw" he will swing in the proper direction.

As to Jerry, I honestly believe he was the equal, if not the superior of Mike, in intelligence. But as to what he could have done on the trail I was never to know.

Having paid Salmon-Bellied Mike for his dogs, I asked him if he knew where I could get any more.

"Sure," he said. "Down at Eat-em-up-Frank's."

Throwing the new dogs in with my other three I drove on down the river about three miles, located "Eat-em-up-Frank," and asked if he had any dogs.

"Sure, I ketch 'um. Hunnard dollar each you ketch 'um."

"Let's see 'em."

He had two huskies and a Malemute. I had my mouth all open to tell him what I thought about Malemutes, knowing them to be belly-full of cussedness in general, and absolutely without principles. Sure, dogs are like people—different dispositions, different likes and dislikes, but most important of all, different principles, some with, and some without. . . . Then I looked down, and smack into the face of the prettiest damned dog that ever ran on four legs.

"That your Malemute?"

Eat-em-up-Frank grinned.

"Him Chena. Damn pretty dog!"

"Your right he's damn pretty," I said, and right then I forgot everything I knew about dogs in general and Malemutes in particular. Why, say, I could go into a kennel anywhere, any time, take a look at the faces of the dogs and tell you whether they were any good or not! But that damn Chena, just like the woman that makes a plumb fool out of a man the minute he looks at her—how beautiful she is, and everything, even when her cussedness is written right on her face, plain for all to see!

The shine on that Malemute's fur simply blinded me, until all I could see was that beautiful gray coat, solid color, pure silver, and those pointed ears, stub of a tail carried proudly, and his eyes sparkling; the long and the short of it is that, poor fool that I was, I bought that Malemute, and paid seventy-five good dollars for him.

After I paid the money I sensed something in the transaction that hadn't been out in the open.

"What's wrong with that Malemute?" I asked.

"Naw. Nothing. Him good dog. Him pace all day long."

I never yet saw a dog that was a pacer that wasn't a fighter. Major was a pacer. But that was just another thing I forgot when I looked at Chena.

I put him in with the team—the dogs hitched double—throwing him about the middle of the swing, and started back up the river. It was always my custom, coming into Fairbanks, to take a short cut rather than follow the regular trail around Garden Island, thus saving nearly a mile.

My dogs had made this trip so many times that they'd take the railroad bridges automatically, stepping from tie to tie with never a break. All the way up the river I watched my new dogs and I congratulated myself I had a wonderful team in the making. They would never, of course, be record holders like my "bird dogs," but then, there were only seven of *their* kind in the arctic.

And as they strung out before me, my eye went again and again to that silver Malemute. Gad, he was pretty! He seemed to be making the going without effort, head and tail erect, pointed ears forward, and, where all the other dogs were running, he paced along as cocky as could be. I liked him!

Just then we came to the railroad tracks and I swung my dogs up onto the grade. For a time everything went

fine. Then we came to the first of the long bridges over the slews outside Fairbanks.

I don't know just how it happened. I think Chena's team-mate must have swung over against him, for I saw a swift sideward swing of his head, a flash of fangs and there on the bridge, his throat torn out, was one of my dogs!

Before I could get around my sled, pandemonium broke loose. Let almost any Alaskan dog smell blood and you've got a problem on your hands. Let ten or twelve of them, hitched double and spread out over a bridge, smell blood and you've got hell rampant.

Those were the hottest few minutes I ever spent in my life. That whole damned team was fighting, some at grips; others swinging down between the ties hanging by their necks with only their harness holding them. With a yell I was in amongst them, cutting loose those that were in danger of strangling, letting them fall to the snow below. Clubbing, kicking and cursing, it took me all of a quarter of an hour to get those devils straightened out and quieted. Then I began taking stock of the damage. Two dogs lay dead, the one Chena had torn the throat out of, the other with his belly ripped open. Three dogs were limping around down in the slew.

It took me an hour to get them all back up on the grade and the harness repaired so I could make it back into Fairbanks. Hopelessly crippled and riding in the sled was Jerry, one of the huskies for which I had just paid Salmon-Bellied Mike a hundred and fifty dollars!

Never after did he go out on the trail. I worked on him for more than a year but was unable to cure him. That was the last time he ever set more than three legs to the ground.

All the dog lore I had learned began coming back to me as we mushed on into Fairbanks. And you can bet I said a few things to that beautiful Malemute that he had never heard before, from either white man or Indian!

As a boy I don't suppose I swore more than ordinary. But a man cannot be a successful dog musher and not curse. The time came when I was considered the champion curser of Alaska. Some men will take exception to what I have just said about cursing. Just the same I contend that a dog understands cursing better than any other form of expression. Why? Not because you are using any particular set of words, but simply because, in cursing, you get an emphasis into your expression that you cannot get in any other way. On the other hand I will say that I have sung to my dogs for hours on the trails and had them pull their hearts out. That sounds like a contradiction, doesn't it? But it isn't. *There's a time for singing and a time for cursing.* And I decided that this wasn't a time for singing!

Yet I was stubborn enough to decide also that I'd make a good dog out of Chena before he got through with me. So, on every trip after that I took him with me. One day I discovered why he was so fresh every night when we reached camp. That sucker wasn't pulling a pound! He kept his line taut, paced along as

proud as a peacock—the cagy little devil—kept his tugs right up, but actually wasn't pulling enough of the load to move your hat from your head. When, after a hard mush, the other dogs would flop to the snow, done in, Chena would strut proudly about, as if to say, "You poor fish, let a little work like that get you down! Look at me, I'm as fresh as a daisy and ready to mush another forty miles without stopping."

But let another dog come near him, and back would go those lips and if I didn't yell or throw something at him, there sure was hell a-popping! I learned early in the game that he was a fighting fool, he'd tackle anything, at any time or place, according to his notion. He was made for fighting.

And foxy! No matter how tight I'd strap his collar, by morning he was out of it and running wild. I've doubled the chain around his neck, cinched his collar till I thought it would choke him, saying, "Now, you outlaw, get out of that if you can!" only to find him loose in the morning.

On one trip I stopped over night at Kockrines. There were a lot of homeless, hungry, savage Malemites in the village and I took especial care to see to it Chena was tied securely.

About midnight, Fred Thompson, who ran the N. C. store there, and with whom I was stopping, came in to my room and shook me.

"Bert," he said, "I think your dogs are loose. There's bedlam outside!"

I listened. Sure enough. He was right. I could hear it.

I grabbed my clothes, snapped into them, lit a lantern and opened the door.

I stumbled over a dog—dead! A little farther along I found two more, while from down the street came sounds of the damndest dog-fight you ever heard!

I hurried to the kennels to see if my dogs were safe. If so, then I was going back to bed and let the best dog win.

One look, and I was off at a run. Chena had left his collar, a tuft of hair clinging to it!

Well, I knew where to look for him! Right in the middle of a pile of what must have been twenty fighting, snapping, bloody Malemutes, snarling and tearing—trying to lick all the dogs in the village.

With the aid of Thompson I kicked and clubbed the other dogs off him and dragged him to the kennels. There wasn't a spot on him as big as your hand that wasn't slashed and bleeding. Any other dog would have died. But not that sucker! I patched him up the best I could and the next morning went to look at him in daylight. He was a sight! Blood, cuts and wounds all over. But the pointed ears were up and the light in his eyes brilliant and gleaming. Unconquered and still willing. I was so disgusted with him I just about turned him loose for the village dogs to finish. It would have been better perhaps if I had.

A little later Thompson and I went around the village to take stock of the damage. Between the trading-post and the river we found ten dead dogs and I don't think there was a dog in the village that didn't carry

Chena's mark. Pretty good night's work for one Male-mute!

It was impossible to take Chena on with me, so having put him in a kennel he couldn't get out of, and having Thompson's promise to doctor him, I mushed on, finished my trip and on the way back stopped and picked him up again. But I had made up my mind that *as soon as I got to Fairbanks I'd get rid of him.*

All the way, as I watched him pacing along, knowing he wasn't pulling an ounce, and that he wasn't the least bit conscience-stricken over what he had done, I got hotter and hotter under the collar. I had a lot of satisfaction deciding just how I'd kill him; though I knew I wouldn't. I have never killed a dog in all my years working with them, save those that broke their legs or otherwise became injured on the trails and had to be put out of their misery.

Then I figured what fun it would be to let Major practice on him. Good as Chena was, he'd last about two minutes with that demon! There may have been dogs that could have battled with Major, but I never saw them. I have seen him, when hitched to the sled (I had to drive him at wheel) with the dogs on a mad run, flash out his ugly head, grab a rabbit that the leaders had scared up from the trail, shake it a moment, and then toss it back over his shoulder—perhaps to hit me in the face. And this, mind you, without ever breaking his pace! I do not know of any other dog in all Alaska that could do it. That trick got me in a mess of trouble once.

There was Mignon, one of the girls from "down the row" in Fairbanks. I was coming home, my dogs racing down Cushman Street, staging the usual run-away. As we neared the intersection of Fourth Street, Mignon, this little French demi-monde, dressed in a kimono, was crossing the street on her way to her house in the row. Trailing after her was a little, fluffy, white bundle of fur. She called it a dog! We swung past them at about ten or twelve miles an hour. Not one of my dogs paid any attention either to Mignon or her poodle—except Major! As he raced past, he swung out, caught up that nosegay, and without stopping to shake it, tossed it over his head and at my feet, dead as a door-nail!

Have you ever been cursed by a French "lady"?

You haven't? Well, let me tell you you've missed a treat!

That dame stood there in her red silk slippers, and cursed me for ten minutes without ever repeating!

I thought I was pretty good, but believe me that day I added words to my vocabulary that came in mighty handy afterward on the trail!

Well, of course a crowd gathered, and at every hilarious suggestion from some bystander Mignon went into a new tirade. She was going to kill Major, myself and my whole damned outlaw team—and that was the mildest threat she made!

That night I hunted up the man who was living with her and gave him a hundred dollars.

"For Pete's sake," I said to him, "send out to the

States, or to France, or somewhere, and get that woman another nosegay, will you?"

"Yeah, I'll get her one," he said. "She thought a lot of that dog, Hansen. Better not go down Fourth Street until she cools off. She'll kill you, sure as hell."

Well, I stayed away from Fourth Street, you can bet on that, for I had a hunch she would too.

But getting back to Chena. It was sport to gloat over what Major was going to do to him when I got him back to Fairbanks. And then of course, when I got there, you who have driven dogs can understand what happened! I never took him near Major. Instead I put a collar on him and led him up through the town. I was going to find the pound keeper and give him a dollar to shoot him.

As I passed the N. C. store Bert Smith happened to be standing in the doorway.

"Gad, Hansen," he said, "That's a beautiful dog you've got there. Where did you get him?"

"Want to buy him?" I asked, stepping aside to let him get a good look at Chena.

He laughed. "Huh, what'd I want with him? Besides, I haven't the money. Can't afford him. But Lord, he's a dandy!"

"He sure is! In more ways than one. See how he carries himself. Look at that tail! Those ears! That silver coat!"

"He's a beauty!"

"Got two-bits on you?" I asked. In those days twenty-five cents was our smallest piece of money.

“Yeah. Why?”

“Gimme two-bits for him and you can have him.”

“What’s the matter with him?”

Smith, like every one else in Fairbanks knew me well enough to know that if I got a good dog I kept him. So naturally he was skeptical.

“There ain’t a thing the matter with him,” I said. “Look him over. I’ll tell you this, though, he’s the best single-handed scrapper in Alaska, outside of Major.”

Smith looked Chena over and I could see the dog was getting to him, the same as he had to me.

“Gimme a bill of sale for him?”

“Sure! But that two-bits buys bare dog. The collar doesn’t go with him.”

“All right. Here’s your two-bits. Come on in and make me out a bill of sale while I get a collar for him.”

I followed him inside the store, made out the bill of sale and swinging my collar and chain went out, leaving Smith gazing proudly at his new possession.

I don’t think I was past that way again for two or three days. When I did pass, Smith was waiting for me.

“Say,” he opened up, “what the hell kind of a dog did you sell me?”

“Malemute,” I said innocently. “Why, what’s wrong with him?”

“Wrong with him! He’s killed every damned dog in my neighborhood. Half the folks up there are gunning for me. I’m broke paying the damage.”

“Well, I told you he was the best single-handed scrapper in Alaska, didn’t I?”

"I'll give you fifty dollars to come up and get him. He won't let me near him."

I shook my head. "Nix! I've had all I want of him. He's your dog. You got a bill of sale, didn't you?"

"I'll make it seventy-five."

"Don't want him. Sell him to some one else. He's a good dog. Beautiful!"

"You go to hell. I hope some dog kills you."

With which amiable sentiment we parted and I went on down to the Fairbanks Buffet where over a glass of beer I had to tell the story. When I passed the N. C. that night Smith met me.

"Well, I got rid of that dog," he said. "I sold him to the barber at the Pioneer Hotel. Got two-fifty."

"Fine. What's the barber going to do with him?"

He grinned at me. "Don't know. Thought he was pretty."

"And so he is!" I said solemnly. "You ought to buy the drinks out of the profits."

"Okay! If I'd a'kept him another day I'd a been out another hundred."

If one could only look ahead and see where a harmless joke is going to end I think there would be little practical joking. So far, neither Smith nor I had seen the career of Chena from anything but a funny angle. I'd stung Smith; he'd slipped one over on the barber.

In turn the barber, in all good faith, doubled his money and sold the dog to old Red Rogers. I didn't know about the transaction until everything was over. If I'd known in time I would have stopped it.

Red Rogers was a harmless old soul, one of the fixtures in that part of Alaska. An old-timer, one of the first men to come into the country in the days of the Gold Rush, he had drifted from the Klondike to Circle, to Forty Mile, and thence to every camp where gold had been struck. He had but one bad habit; he loved liquor! Red would come to town, get on a drunk that lasted as long as his money, or until the DT's threatened. Then they'd take him to the hospital where, after he was back in shape, he'd swear to go straight home and never to drink again. And, sure enough, he'd hitch up his dog and set out for his prospect.

There are many men like Red Rogers in Alaska. One-dog prospectors! Owning a little claim somewhere in the hills, managing to get out enough gold to keep them going with a little left over for their periodical sprees when they hit camp—in the end finally going crazy from loneliness or dying somewhere out in the great uncharted wastes of the country.

One-dog prospectors! Their outfit a light Yukon sled, on which they pack their provisions, and an old, tried, and faithful dog to pull the load back to the location. These dogs, often grown too old for the trail, are generally of the larger breeds, for the load is usually heavy. For years perhaps, the man and dog have been companions, the sole companionship in months and months of lonely existence. There grows up between the two an affection that is far removed from the sordid things of this world, with a love and loyalty on

the dog's part that sometimes seems wasted when you consider the man side of the partnership.

On the out trips you often see them, man and dog in harness, the man with a rope over his shoulder, or on the gee-pole, both toiling, on and on, at a snail's pace, but in perfect contentment. They have the whole of Alaska and all the time there is to make it in.

Such a man was old Red Rogers. And such was his dog, Buster, on whom Old Red lavished all the warm affection of his Irish heart. I have seen that dog of Red's following him from saloon to saloon, and if, as sometimes happened, Old Red took on too big a cargo and fell beside the path, Buster would beat it for the Hospital where he would bark until he was admitted. They knew then that somewhere Old Red was down and in need of medical attention, and that Buster would lead them back to him.

A few days after the barber bought Chena, Red Rogers came into Fairbanks. He had made a small strike, had a little spare money after buying his provisions. Dropping into the barber shop to get a haircut and a shave the barber tried to persuade Red that he needed two dogs, that he was getting too old to pull in the harness.

The Irish are said to love beauty, and I guess they do. Anyway, something in Old Red was touched by the beauty of that dog Chena. And when the barber only asked five dollars for him, the transaction was soon closed.

That afternoon, instead of the one-man, one-dog,

outfit mushing out of Fairbanks, Red drove two dogs, Chena in the lead, old faithful Buster on the wheel.

In less than half an hour the barber-shop door was flung violently open and Old Red stood on the threshold, trembling with fury. Waving a fist at the barber, he yelled hoarsely, "What kind av a domned dog did ye sell me? Dad burn your onery hide to hell!"

"Why, what's the matter, Red?"

"Matter, is it? You jist come along out and take a look." Cursing vividly, Old Red waved for the barber to follow him.

"Hold on, Red, what in tarnation is the matter? What about the dog?"

"What about him? He's killed my old Buster, that's what about him. Tore the throat clear out of him! And now the domned baste won't let me go anywhere near me dog. Oh, me Buster, me poor Buster—"

"Listen, Red," soothed the barber. "I didn't know anything about the dog. I had just bought him."

"And where is the worthless son av a bitch that sold ye him?"

"Why I got him from Bert Smith of the N. C., Red. I gave two and a half for him."

"Ye might have known," cut in Red savagely. "Whin and ever did Smith know anything about dogs?"

"Well, let's go over and ask him where he got him."

The barber shed his apron and he and Red hunted up Smith, who of course claimed to be an innocent party.

"Why," he said, "I bought the dog off Hansen. I gave two-bits for him."

With that Old Red hit the ceiling.

"Hansen! Holy Mither, didn't ye have the sinse to know he wouldn't sell a dog unless they was something wrong wid it? I'm goin' to have a talk wid him!"

I was at supper, when I heard footsteps coming up the walk. The moment I saw the barber, with Smith and Old Red, I knew I had not heard the last of Chena.

"Domn your worthless hide, why don't you kill your no good dogs whin ye don't want thim?" The old man didn't waste time on preliminaries.

"What's the trouble, Red?"

"Trouble. You come on out to Garden Island and I'll show ye! Me poor old Buster is a lyin' out there wid his head torn open. Buster—me own Buster—" Old Red began to rock and sob and the tears rolled down his withered, weather lined cheeks.

"God damn you, Hansen, why don't you shoot your dogs whin ye don't want thim?"

Old Red was fast losing control of himself and in my heart I didn't blame him for the cussing he gave me.

"Hold on, Red," I said, "I'll give you a dog. A better puller than your old Buster. I can't bring Buster back to life, Red, but I can give you a dog to take his place at the sled."

"Don't want 'im!"

"Oh yes, you do. You've got to have a dog, Red! I wouldn't *sell* this one to any man on earth. But I know you'll take good care of him. So I'm going to let you have him."

"What good will he do? That devil won't let me anywhere near my sled, I tell you."

"I'll take this dog out there and hitch him up to your sled for you. I'll handle that damned outlaw. Now come on out here and take a look at the fellow I'm going to give you."

Yukon, one of my best huskies, a huge dog, had become too slow for the rest of the team and I had about decided to pension him. He'd be the ideal dog for Red Rogers. I have seen him pull a thousand pounds from a standstill—a hundred pounds is considered a good load for a dog—and he would go till he dropped. I un-snapped him and led him out to Old Red.

"There, Red, is a dog that can pull your load and you too. Take good care of him, for I think the world and all of him. Now, let's go out to your sled and I'll hitch him in for you."

With Old Red leading we all took our way out to Garden Island. Sure enough, there was Buster, dead, and, circling around the sled, his fangs bared, was Chena. The moment Red got close, Chena lunged for him.

"There, you see—" says Red.

"Yeah, I see. Gimme that chain off my dog there. Stand, Yukon!"

Doubling the chain, and wrapping the end around my wrist I made for Chena. Old Red's misery was so real, so touching that I was hoping he would make a lunge at me. But he must have seen the hope in my eyes, for he never made a move, though he bared his fangs and threatened.

Unsnapping him from the line I led him back, put

Yukon in harness, then turned and helped Old Red as he tenderly lifted his dead dog to the top of the load. It was pitiful.

"I can at laist give ye dacent burial . . . Buster . . . me ould pal . . ." and Red got down on his knees and put his old arms around his dog.

The only thing I could do was to look off at the mountains and make believe I didn't see; let him have out his grief in decent privacy. Well, finally he got up and through custom, took his place at the gee pole.

"Better get on and ride, Red," I said, "Yukon will pull you."

But he was skeptical. Off they started, Yukon settling down into his collar as the drag came, pulling for all he was worth. Soon he got the sled in motion, and just before they turned the bend of the river we saw Old Red step away from the gee pole and swing up on the runners. As I had said, Yukon was pulling it all, the sled, the load, Red's dead Buster, and for the first time in years, Old Red was riding.

As they swung out of sight, Red turned and waved his arm in the musher's signal of good-by. Then they were gone, back into the silence of the hills.

Alaska! A man cannot joke with her, for the joke goes beyond the human being and dares to trifle with something more powerful; the irrevocability of the Storm Gods of the North! The wind, the snow, the stark cold; the dogs and the men, are all one together, fighting each other as they are.

But this was not all, for the little harmless joke that

began with my selling Chena to Bert Smith, was to end in tragedy!

And so one bitter cold day the call came! Old Red, starting out from Al Garner's and on up Birch Creek had failed to make it into the next cabin. Al was the game warden then, and Red, bull-headed, staggering, let us say slightly drunk, had set out against Al's advice.

But breaking trail in a storm is tiring work and soon Old Red decided to lie down and rest.

There was no Buster to run barking for help, and Yukon kept the only watch he knew, by his master's body—to the end. Wrapped in silence, save for an occasional sharp crack of the ice, Old Red slept on. . . . A heaving of the ice surface, another crack, like the bursting of a huge balloon, and over the frozen top surged the ice-water from the stream beneath. Rapidly, in widening fan, it raced on and on, swirling around the silent form, rising—rising, and at last floating over him and on. . . .

And thus we found him! Frozen stiff there in his transparent coffin. It was my duty to chop the body from the ice, to transport Old Red back to Fairbanks, and see that he had decent burial. And all those long miles my mind went back to that day when I had slipped Bert Smith's two-bit piece over the bar of the Fairbanks Buffet and amidst the laughter of the gang told of the worthless Malemute I had wished on him.

I don't like to remember.

CHAPTER X

THE MELOZI KID

MOST men in Alaska acquire a nickname, and as the years go by they become so accustomed to the handle they have had wished on them they almost forget the names their parents gave them. Take the Melozi Kid for example. By that title and that only, he was known throughout the Interior.

The Melozi Kid and I tangled through the Kid's pride in the speed and stamina of his dog team, and an inclination on his part to make sport of the law.

The episode is fresh in my memory because the Kid is the only man I ever swore out a warrant for in all the years I was Deputy United States Marshal in Alaska.

The Melozi Kid was an old-timer. In the earlier days he had been a mail-team driver and one of the best of them. Any old sour-dough can tell you just how much that means. He won a reputation as a famous musher at that occupation. Later the Kid became a squaw man and from that took to running whisky to the Indians.

On the whole he wasn't a bad little squirt, at least there was nothing vicious about him. He took good care of his dogs, and but for one thing would have been a useful citizen. And that one thing—he would sell

whisky to any one who had the price: man, woman, or kid—white or Indian.

When I knew the Kid he was about thirty years of age, a slender, little chap and as hard as nails. Our office had knowledge of his whisky running but no one ever had preferred charges against him. On several occasions when I had come across him, I had warned him; told him that while he was in good health he'd better cut out the selling to the Indians.

He never laughed to my face, but he would step around the corner to the first Indian shack, and laugh his head off. He considered what I said a huge joke, and he kept right on with his activities. In fact, he got to thinking it such a huge joke that he finally wrote me the following letter:

Deppity Marshil Hansen

Fairbanks, Alaska

Yu yaller bellied dog-musher,

I bin told yu clame tu have the fastist dawg teme in Alaska. Yur a liar! Yur dawgs r as lazy as yu r. Yu cudn't katch nobody who didnt lay down. My dawgs kan outrun yur dawgs any da in the weak and twicest on sunday. If yu dont think so yu . . . tri an ketch me. Ile be in Melozy next weak and wate til you cum. Ile hav a sledful of whisky wich Im goin to sel to the Indians. Cum on or tak off that tin badg yu long leggud jack-as.

sincerely

the Melozi Kid.

P.S. I bet fiftie dolars yu dont cum. I hope yu doo yu an yur dawgs nede sum rele xercise I aim tuh tak an sho you the kuntry.

the kid."

I took the letter in and gave it to Marshal Love. He studied it a moment.

"Well, Bert," he said, "what do you advise? You evidently know the Kid better than I do, and after all, this letter seems to be personal."

"I know him this well, Marshal. If we let him get away with it our office will be the laughing-stock of the country. That little pup will tell every one he meets he's challenged me and that I'm afraid to take him up . . . that he has a dog team that can run mine to death—"

"Has he?"

"I'll give him credit for this," I said. "He's got damned good dogs and the little devil knows every corner of the country to sneak into and out of. If I start out after him, getting him isn't going to be any picnic."

The Marshal studied the letter a bit longer, then looked up at me quizzically.

"Well, this looks like an opportunity to me. You've been bragging about how good your dogs are. This ought to be a good chance to demonstrate."

That got me.

"All right," I said, "I'm going right in to the Commissioner and swear out my first complaint against anybody. You can look for me back when I get back. I'm going to get that Kid if it takes me all winter."

"Go ahead," he said, "and good luck."

I knew the Melozi Kid's headquarters were at Melozi, a hundred and sixty-five miles below Tanana

on the Yukon, and I figured he'd do just as he had said in his letter. He'd be at Melozi on or near the date he had set.

He used to get his liquor at Nulato, sixty miles below Melozi, and then would travel the whole district peddling it. I carried in my pocket a warrant for his arrest on a charge of selling liquor to the Indians. I had spent hours going over my equipment, and had given especial care and attention to my dogs. I knew I was in for a race to the finish.

I planned to reach Melozi after dark and made it about five o'clock in the evening. Before unhitching the dogs I proceeded to look up the Kid, only to find out that he had left there at noon that day, and also left me a message.

"Say," he had told the road-house keeper, "I think Hansen will be in some time to-day. You tell him I've hit for the Melozi hills and the Koyukuk. Tell him I hate to take this five or six hours start of him, but that's the truth as to where I'm headin'. If he don't believe you, tell him that two miles out he'll find three broken willows lying across the trail. I don't want him to think I'm misleading him. All I want him to do is try to catch me!"

Sure enough the next morning I found the three broken willows, approximately where he had said they would be. Wrapped around one of them was a piece of paper. On it, in his most illiterate spelling I made out the following,

"Cum on, don't be a pikr."

Well, *I figured it would soon be all over; that I'd catch up with him the next day. But did I? I'll say I didn't. Not the next day, or the next, or next! That little runt ran me all around the Yukon. I'd get to a place and find he'd been there the night before, and always he left me a trail to follow. It wasn't that he was running away, it was just a race, a race that tickled the Melozi Kid's queer sense of humor.*

However, as I pushed my dogs to their last ounce of strength, siwashed on the trail at night—counted the days—I wondered just what the Kid would do when I did catch him, for catch him I meant to if he took me clear to the Pole!

Perhaps it was funny now, but would it be funny when we met? The Kid knew how to handle a gun.

At Wiseman's, on the Koyukuk (the most northerly of all Alaskan gold camps and far within the arctic circle) I had the first direct word from him since finding the willow sticks and his note.

"He left this morning. Said to tell you he was headed for Bettles," they told me. By this time our race was known to every road-house keeper and miner on the trails. Bets were offered me that I could not catch him and bets were made between others that I would. And all the while the Kid was laughing at me, teasing me. . . . I began to get mad.

By this time I knew that he was leading me back toward the Yukon, doubling back; taking me for a ride, in a wide circle, making sport of me! Eight hundred miles we had gone already! If I ever let him com-

plete that circle and beat it back to his old stamping ground I'd never be able to hold up my head again in Alaska.

I jumped on my sled and raising my voice, sang to my dogs as they had never been sung to before, and I drove them until they all but lay down in harness. Snatching but the minimum of rest we were up and at it again. I had to catch the Kid!

Then we came to what would be in a race, the last lap. I spent a little time going over my dogs, seeing that they were all in fit shape, and then I started down the trail.

"Well, Kid," I said, "here's where we fight it out to a finish and may the best dogs win!"

There were exactly two hundred and fifty miles left before we'd strike his home territory. From Bettles I drove sixteen hours without rest. Then I stopped, fed my team, and myself, rolled up and tried for a few hours rest. But sleep evaded me, for in my eyes there was always the picture of the Kid, racing ahead of me, looking back over his shoulder, grinning victoriously. I got up and we struck the trail again. Another sixteen hours without a stop, and then a smoldering campfire on the trail—a hot mockery—and his sled tracks still straight. I had to admit that he had some good little team.

If his dogs had been played out, they would have swayed the sled, their pace wouldn't have been straight and true, there would have been dog feet tracks at the edge of the trail.

Looking at my own plucky fellows, I saw Ginger's back veering off.

"Hey boy! Ginger . . . mush . . . snap into it. We're nearly there . . . snap out there, boy . . . we can't let that little runt's dogs beat us."

As I got into the clearing before an Indian cabin, on the trail to Koyukuk on the Yukon River, I saw smoke *curling up from the chimney, then a team of dogs in* front of the door. I knew the Kid was inside!

My dogs on the dead run, we swung up to the other team. Above the instant chorus of yelps as the two teams met, I heard a loud guffaw. "God Almighty! Here he comes!"

With a bound I was off, and inside. There, sitting at the table, wolfing down a great meal of caribou meat, sat the Melozi Kid. He dropped his knife and fork, and we stared at each other. I waited for him to show fight.

Finally he spoke.

"Shut the door, you darned fool. It's cold! Come in and have a bite. I know damned well you haven't had a square for sixteen days!"

"Thanks. What you got?"

He pointed to the plate before him.

"Not a hell of a lot, but half of it's yours."

We ate. We exchanged incidents of the trail. We roared with laughter and pounded each other on the backs. After we finished the meal I put my hand in my pocket.

"Kid I've got a warrant for you."

"Yeah," he returned calmly. "I've known it all along."

"I'm going to serve it, Kid!"

"Yeah," he said again. "Have a smoke. Did you get the word I left for you at Tanana, and also at Melozi?"

I nodded.

"Didn't lie to you, did I?"

He seemed to get a great deal of satisfaction out of that. Sort of proud of his honesty, if you know what I mean.

"Say, what the devil was your idea—running me all over hell and gone?"

The Kid leaned back and stretched.

"Well, I figured this way, Bert. I knew you'd come to the place where pretty soon you were going to serve on me anyway, so I thought I'd give you a run for your money. I didn't have nothin' else on foot right now, and my dogs needed a little exercise!"

"Well, the play's over, Kid! Are you going to be a good sport and come in, peaceable? You've got to learn you can't peddle whisky in our district, and you can't make a laughing-stock of our office."

"Aw, forget it, chief! I wasn't laughing at you—not the way you mean! We had a good ride, didn't we? Sure I'm going with you. I got sense enough to know when I'm beat, and shootin' you up ain't goin' to get me nothin'!"

"That's the boy. Well, I've got to read this warrant to you. What's your real name, anyway? We have to

make it out properly. I've only got 'The Melozi Kid' on here."

He stared at me, a funny look in his eyes.

"Gosh, I don't know," he exclaimed, after a moment. "The first one's George, but I'll be damned if I know the other one . . . never had no use for it."

"Then 'George, The Melozi Kid,' is the way she reads. Suit you?"

"Sure. That's all right. We'll just drop off and tell the old woman. Anyway, I need a rest, and I'll be where she can't peck at me all the time. C'mon. Let's go!"

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BOOK

III

THE SAGA OF THE CHANDALAR TRAIL

"Have you known the Great White Silence, not a snow-gemmed twig aquiver?

(Eternal truths that shame our soothing lies.)

Have you broken trail on snowshoes? mushed your huskies up
the river,

Dared the unknown, led the way, and clutched the prize?

Have you marked the map's void spaces, mingled with the
mongrel races,

Felt the savage strength of brute in every thew?

And though grim as hell the worst is, can you round it off
with curses?

Then hearken to the Wild . . . it's wanting you."

ROBERT W. SERVICE—"The Call of the Wild"

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CHAPTER I

APPARENTLY A MURDER

IT WAS always the same. Nothing ever happened in good weather. But let a bad spell come and all Hell broke loose. Death used to have a sort of fascination for me, when I was a kid; seemed to be something about it, that made me feel it was awful for a person to die away off somewhere, and never get back for a decent burial.

I've gotten over that feeling. I've spent too many days of agony, tugging around some cold, dead thing . . . bringing it back from the white, clean place where it had laid itself down for final rest, just so my fellow-men could pat themselves on the back for doing the proper thing, and shoveling six feet of fresh earth on top of a coffin! No, when I die, if it's out on the trail, with the pure white snow drifting over me, I don't want any one to try to do the "decent thing" by me. Let me lie right where I passed to the other trail, with the howl of a wolf-dog as a requiem.

And I've a hunch, could he have had his own way, Clarke would still be lying there in the ice and gravel of the bed of Wind River. But no, I had to dig him out and bring him back where they could thaw him out. He began thawing long before I had a chance to

turn him over to the other fellow. And it wasn't the pleasantest thing in the world when he did—being nearly two years dead as he was—that night there in Chatanika. But I'm getting to the end before I tell you the beginning.

"Who was Clarke?"

Well, if you want to know about him and to hear the story of the worst and longest mush of my life—here goes!

It was the night of November 6th, 1910. I was passing Marshal Love's office, and I saw a light inside. Following my custom, I dropped in for a chat.

I found my chief at his desk, staring off into space, a telegram in his hand. "I was just thinking of you, Bert," he said. "Come in, and shut the door."

He tossed me the telegram. "Read that."

It was from John Cornell, an old-timer, miner, prospector, and for the last year, official census taker for the Government for that section of Alaska north of Circle City, and extending to the arctic. The telegram read:

Marshal Love—Fairbanks.

Found body of Clarke prospector believe murdered on headwaters upper Wind River tributary East Fork Chandalar. I covered body to protect from animals.

JOHN CORNELL

"Whew," I said, "that's a nice one!"

"It's the biggest job this office ever had—and—I'm afraid of it! Not for the office, but for you."

"Shucks! I'd just as soon go after the body of this man Clarke as to spend the winter plodding along the old trails. A dead man isn't such bad company, after all. He can't talk back and he stays put. I've had worse!"

"Do you realize just where you'll have to go, and how many white men *haven't* been in there? It's an ungodly country any time, and at this season of the year—why boy, it isn't even on the maps! No trails. No grub. No white men—perhaps no other living soul—I don't know but we'd better pass it up."

"I've never been afraid of an outlying country yet," I said.

"All right. We'll forget the country. How about the attitude of the Chandalar? How did Clarke get in wrong with them, if he did get in wrong? What do you know about him—anything?"

"Only common gossip around Circle. He and an old-timer named Geherty were mining around the Old Caro district on the Lower Chandalar river, when they got an outfit together—about a year and a half ago—to go into the upper Chandalar country prospecting. Haven't been heard of since."

"Hm . . . looks bad from the Chandalar angle, doesn't it?"

"Just as good a chance that Clarke froze, as that he was killed, Chief," I said.

"Cornell says here he believes Clarke was murdered!" he reminded me, pointing toward the telegram.

"Uh-huh, he does," I agreed.

The Marshal was thoughtful for a while, then:

“How many white men does that make who have gone into that country and never come out? Get out the files and let’s check up.”

Well, we found that over a period of fifteen years, a score of prospectors and trappers—white men—had gone into that section and hadn’t come out. One man had returned with the report that Chief Christian of the Chandalar Indians had escorted him out at the point of a gun, and had warned him not to return.

Moreover, for years there had been persistent rumors of foul play up in that section, until it got to be current belief that any one going into the Upper Chandalar country was sure to be killed.

The records showed also that our office had been appealed to time after time, but that we had never had any real evidence on which to base authority to act.

Marshal Love laid the file of records aside, and again stared at the telegram.

“Well,” he said. “It looks like we’d at last gotten something concrete. Here’s the first outright statement that a man has been found murdered up there. I’m afraid we’ll have to investigate. Where is this Wind River, Bert? Did you ever get any data on that country when you were in Fort Yukon or Circle?”

“All I know about it,” I said, “is gossip. The Lower Chandalar is known. I’ve been up as far as the Old Caro diggings. The Chandalar divides into three streams, the West, the North and the East forks. These are supposed to head somewhere up in the Endicotts.”

“Supposed,” Marshal Love interrupted. “That’s all

we know. Supposed . . . and I've got to send a man out into that!"

"Well, Clarke got there, and if he did, I can," I said.

"What do you know about the East Fork and this Wind River? Anything?"

"Nope. No, nor any one else. That is, white men. The Chandalar Indians live up there somewhere, come down to Fort Yukon and trade with McInroy and Harry Horton. But the country is all unknown, boss."

"Well, it's in our district, anyway, known or unknown," he said, smiling ruefully. "Guess we'd better take a look at it on the map and see what that gives."

We found a lot of dotted lines. The East Fork was indicated. There was no such thing as Wind River on the map.

"God, what a country, Bert!" Marshal Love said, waving a hand at the huge blank section of the map. "Just a vast, frozen space, with no beginning and no end."

"Yep. Tundra!"

"Don't you know of *somebody*, Bert, that's been in there?"

"Well, there's old John Cornell. He says *he* was."

"That's right," laughed the Marshal. "He can probably tell us all about it. If he found Clarke's body no doubt he can take you right to it."

"Uh-huh."

"Well, now here," said the Marshal, assuming a pose he took when he was summing up a situation in his

mind, from all its angles. "Cornell was census taker for that section. He undoubtedly had to go to Flaxman Islands and the Arctic coast. To get there he had to cross the Endicotts. All right. He crossed back from that side and came out on the headwaters of this Wind River. He then followed it down and on the way stumbled on this body. When he got to Circle, he wired us. It all dovetails."

"Sure," I said.

"Well, Bert, I guess you'll have to go. I'll lay the matter before the Court and the District Attorney in the morning. Inasmuch as we have no warrant for any one for the murder, we'll have to wire Washington for the authority to make the trip. And inasmuch as Cornell knows where the body is, he's the logical man to take with you. You get busy on your outfit right away. Gad . . . what an awful trip to send a man on in the dead of winter."

"Shucks," I said. "What's one mush more or less. But I do wish I had some idea how far I've got to go. If I had I could outfit a lot more intelligently!"

"That's so. Certainly you'll have to have something to go on in order to outfit for a trip like that. I'll wire Cornell for distances."

He rose, thrust out his hand. "I hate to do it, Bert, but, if Washington wires the authority, I guess it's up to me to order you to go."

"That's all right," I said, taking his hand. "It will be good exercise."

Well, I'll say right here, it was!

CHAPTER II

ORDERS, OFFICIAL AND OTHERWISE

MARSHAL LOVE talked to District Judge Lyons and to District Attorney Crossley, and the following telegram was sent to Washington, to Attorney-General Wickersham. The wire was virtually as follows:

Attorney-General Wickersham,
Washington, D. C.

Body J. D. Clarke, prospector, reported found Upper Wind River, tributary East Fork Chandalar. Presumably murdered. We urge authority to send Deputy Marshal Hansen into Chandalar to make investigation and return body of Clarke to Fairbanks for autopsy.

Lyons, Crossley, Love.

Meantime Cornell's wire came, and Marshal Love passed it over to me to check out my course on the map. Well, I went over that blamed thing fifty times, and I always came out near the North Pole!

Finally I gave it up with a snort of disgust. The Marshal was watching me all the time.

"What's the trouble, Bert?"

"Hell, Chief, this thing puts me sitting right at the base of the Pole!"

"That's just what I got," he came back.

"What's the answer?"

"The answer is that old John's dizzy."

"Well, we'll know soon. I wired him and told him where his distances put us. He's probably made a mistake, or the telegrapher has."

We opened Cornell's answer eagerly.

"Now we'll get this straightened out," Marshal Love said and read aloud: "My data and distances all correct. Country never surveyed. Maps all wrong.—John Cornell."

We just stood and looked at each other. Finally I cussed and Marshal Love remarked:

"Well, he may be right at that. He's been there and we haven't. When we hear from Washington you go to Circle and get Cornell to guide you. In the meantime, you've got enough to worry about, getting ready for the trip."

While we were waiting for authority from Washington we dug out of Marshal Love's library all we could about the Chandalar. Pieced together we got something like this:

The Chandalar Indians are a mountain and plains tribe. When Alaska was first discovered by the white man, they were a powerful tribe of the Interior. They were warlike and ruled undisturbed their hunting grounds. At the time of the purchase of Alaska, they had their headquarters at what is now Circle City. Upon the advent of the white man into the country and the subsequent discovery of gold, they withdrew

from a well-built town and moved ninety miles down the Yukon where again they established a village, later inhabited by the white man and called Fort Yukon. They are Christian Indians, were converted sometime during the reign of the Chief Christian's grandfather, Christian the first. The tribe is ruled by a hereditary chief, whose word is law, but who has a council composed of two advisors.

The white man began to settle in and around Fort Yukon and the Chandalar again moved, withdrawing further into the North. This was, undoubtedly during the time of the present chief Christian's father. The Chandalar are town-building Indians, but roam widely over long trap lines. Their villages at Fort Yukon are laid out in streets and with some idea of design. The same applies to the Indian part of Circle City, though not so plainly marked because of their brief term of residence.

They settled on the Christian River at a town called by them Christian City. This town is unknown to the white man, or to but few. At some time later they either quarreled with the missionaries, or merely classed the missionaries with the rest of the whites whom their actions tend to show, they hate. Gold was discovered on the lower Chandalar and the Chandalar Indians again abandoned their homes, and withdrew far into the North. They are now located somewhere in the Upper Chandalar country in the neighborhood, it is thought, of the East Fork of the Chandalar. Judging from their former homes it is supposed they have established a well-

built town; are located in timber and where hunting is good, inasmuch as they make their living by hunting and trapping.

The exact location of their present village is unknown. What few white men have gone into their country prospecting have never returned, and rumors are that these men have all been murdered by these Indians. There is always a chance that these men have died from the rigors of the climate, which must be extremely severe, inasmuch as these people must now be crowded close up against the Endicott Mountains. These Indians have modern arms, as well as their own native weapons. Their guns have been obtained, undoubtedly, by fur-trading.

Chief Christian and some few members of his tribe are known to the residents and traders of Fort Yukon and Circle City. Each year they come in with their annual catch and trade them for food and supplies.

Chief Christian is well spoken of. However, it is believed that the Chandalar hold a hatred for the whites who have pressed them further and further North, where undoubtedly the living conditions are much harder; and it is not advisable for white men to attempt prospecting in their country.

This hatred of the white man is also demonstrated in the fact that in cases where a Chandalar woman has married a white man, she is outcast by the tribe, and cannot again live with them. Several cases of this kind are known. The tribe now is supposed to number some two to three hundred and all live in that section

roughly bounded by the Endicott Mountains of the North, and the headwaters of the Koyukuk to the West and the Sheenjek River, a tributary of the Porcupine on the East. Their nearest neighbor is the Husky Eskimo living on the arctic tundra.

Well, when we got all this data together, we decided that the Chandalar wouldn't give me a great big hand, or anything like that.

"My official suggestion," said Marshal Love, "is that you don't mention your reason for being in that country, provided you find it necessary to get in touch with these Indians. However, it is not likely you can get anywhere near them without their knowing it, and you know it is not the policy of this office to sneak about its business. You will be two white men in the land of these Indians—and Indians that are rumored not to want any white men in their territory. Bear that in mind!"

"Sure, I know it."

"You are under official orders to proceed to the spot where Cornell found Clarke's body, and to bring back the remains. You are to make whatever investigation is possible while up there. You are not to allow *any one*, or *any thing*, to interfere with your duty! You are to return *only* when you have accomplished it."

I nodded.

"That's the Marshal speaking, Bert," he said, laying a hand on my shoulder, and the sternness leaving his voice. "Now, as man to man, I feel I am letting you go on an impossible, foolhardy errand. If you get in there,

and find things against you, and yourself in peril, throw it all up and come home! Get me, boy?"

"Yep. I'm to come back when I get Clarke's body, and not before," I said, looking him right in the eyes.

"You heard all I said!"

"Sure, boss, I heard you."

"Well," he said, "get your outfit together and start as soon as you can."

I guess I forgot to say that orders had come from Attorney-General Wickersham authorizing the trip and ordering an investigation as to the cause of Clarke's death, and the punishment of the guilty.

CHAPTER III

OUTFITTING

THERE are three important things to be thought of when outfitting for a mush of this kind. First: Practicability. Second: Compactness. Third: Weight.

A dog team isn't like an automobile. You can't throw on another hundred pounds at the last minute if you can find room for it. You have to weigh up your load according to the number of pounds each of your dogs can pull. The farther out on the trail you go, and the longer your dogs travel on wet food under hard weather conditions, the less they can pull. I knew what kind of an outfit I wanted, but I could not get it. Equipment manufactured expressly for trips of this kind was not to be had in Fairbanks at that time.

What I finally had to content myself with was a canvas tent, 10 by 12, twelve ounce, much too large and heavy. A Yukon stove of light weight sheet iron. I could not obtain pots or pans, or stove pipe that telescoped. My biggest load of any one thing was the fat for the dogs. In extreme cold, dogs must have edible tallow to resist the rigors of the weather.

Now, normally I don't like fat, but out there in that bitter cold, nothing looked better to me than the fat end of a slab of bacon, and clear, fat salt pork was better yet—raw! The Eskimos know their stuff, at that!

I carried six hundred pounds of tallow in fifty pound cans, and I had to haul this from Fairbanks, as I could not get it in Fort Yukon. Naturally everything depended on my dogs. The first consideration must be for them—good food and proper care.

I spent several days making moccasins for their feet, from heavy, all-wool army blankets. Each dog had to be fitted as carefully as a prima donna. The moccasins were then laced tightly. Major took it into his head he wouldn't wear them, and I got them on him only because, true to his contrary nature, he changed his mind at the last moment, not to please me, but just for some canine whim of his own.

My life depended on my dogs. The mere task of picking the ones I thought would make the best team, was a job in itself. Speed, stamina, and above all, the ability to go in the right direction when there are no staked trails to follow, nor even an old trail to smell out, for remember, I was going into absolutely untrailed country.

I had to have dogs that, as nearly as was caninely possible, possessed that instinctive sense of direction born in Northern peoples—in myself—in men like Amundsen, Lindbergh, Stefánsson—who just set out and go, without maps, without compass, without anything but their instinctive knowledge. So, dogs of this kind I must have, or some day an outfit would be going out to pick me up—stiff as a poker, and brittle as an icicle.

My dogs were all eager to go. They always knew

when a trip was in the air, and their bright eyes followed my every move. Tuesday barked every time I came in sight.

"Well, Old Tues," I told him, "it's sure you're going." He seemed to know and understand, and, satisfied, dropped down with his nose on his paws, his eyes watching after me from under his wrinkled brows, but all anxiety gone from his attitude.

I looked at Major, regretting now, more than ever before the fact that he possessed a trail sense that no other dog I had ever met up with possessed. But, if I gave him rope enough to lead, the first thing he'd do would be to clean up the entire team.

"Confound your hide, Major." I grumbled. "Why can't you be decent?"

For answer he swung his head, his mean eyes rolling sidewise at me, and growled. No barking, dancing excitement in that old devil! When all the other dogs were straining eagerly at their chains, tails waving, ears cocked forward, tongues out, breath coming quickly, impatiently, that old devil just stood swinging his head low, growling sullenly.

I finally split up my two best teams, my "dogs of the week," and my "bird dogs."

Tuesday for leader; Tip, the leader of the bird dog team, to be used if anything happened to Tuesday. Tip's brothers, Red, Ginger, Brownie, Monkey and Major, and Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday, with Candy, a light Malemute leader, as trail breaker in loose snow.

I reinforced their harness, made of light, strong, webbing, to stand the heavy strain. When I had finally got my outfit together, the stuff that I would take from Fairbanks, its weight was eight hundred and thirty pounds. This was loaded on my sled, a thirteen foot, twenty-two inch wide basket sled, made of hickory, mortised and held together with a strong gut sinew called babiche. There was not a nail or screw in it, except in the runners. These were fastened to the frame with screw bolts.

As for my personal apparel, there were things I could not buy, things made for me because of friendship; and for underwear I did not take wool, or silk, or any combination of both, but linen, and holes in it at that! Linen mesh!

"But didn't it let in the cold?" you might ask.

It allowed evaporation, which was more to the point; for in that way it reduced the perspiration, and perspiration is one of the many menaces of the musher. Without evaporation it congeals, and chills his body as nothing else can, and worse yet, it has a way of doing it before you are aware of what is happening—then, many times it is too late. Traveling in anything below forty is dangerous at best. Without proper clothing it is suicide. I would be traveling in sixty below—and lower, much of the time. Just one slip, one unforeseen happening, inconsequential enough in normal weather and in civilization—and you've met your finish.

As finally assembled at Fairbanks, my personal outfit consisted of the following: Parka of Siberian squirrel,

hood faced with fox and wolverine (wolverine because it is the only fur that does not hold the moisture of the breath, which subsequently freezes) and lined with silk. Silk, because of lightness, but primarily because of its slipping quality, which facilitates the donning of the Parka, a garment without any front opening, that is pulled over the head like a middy.

Mittens made from the feet of the lynx. Mucklucks with feet made of moosehide, and tops of light-weight caribou with the hair inside. The total weight of my clothing was not over five pounds, and it proved adequate protection at a temperature of seventy degrees below.

Late the evening of the 9th of November, I had my sled loaded. It lay in the jail yard back of the Courthouse at Fairbanks ready for the start in the morning. That night Marshal Love gave a supper party to all the men of the office and we spent a pleasant evening together. Love was unusually quiet all through the dinner and afterward as we sat around smoking, I got the feeling that he was apprehensive about the trip. Finally I said to him,

"Chuck the blues, Chief. I'll be back in sixty days and I'll have that body. I'm certain Cornell is way off in his distances."

"I hope so, Bert," he said seriously. "But he might be correct at that. That's an unknown wilderness."

"Well, I'll be able to tell you all about it when I mush back in here," I said lightly. "I'm not worrying. I've had some pretty tough mushes since I came with

this office. And I'm just cocky enough to feel I can mush over any country John Cornell was ever in."

"Well, that's the way to go at it, anyway. Got everything?"

"Everything I can get here, such as it is. A rotten outfit."

"See what you can do in Fort Yukon. Get the best you can and charge it to this office."

He rose. "Well, fellows. Bert's starting out early in the morning. One toast, then let's let him get some sleep."

They were all on their feet, glasses raised.

"Here's luck!" said the Boss, simply.

I darned near cried as they drank it down, and then swarmed around to shake hands with me. Royal chaps, loyal friends those fellows.

"I'll be on hand in the morning, Bert," said the Marshal. "Don't pull out until I see you. I've something important to tell you."

With that we broke up and I went back to my quarters. A last inspection of my dogs, which brought down upon me the curses of my neighbors (for who wants to have twenty-five huskies howling to high heaven in his back yard in the middle of the night) and I too sought my quarters.

Shortly before nine o'clock the next morning, I halted my team in front of the Court-house. My dogs were wild to go. They yelped and barked and lunged against the two chains with which I had them tied to a telephone pole. It was cold that morning, around thirty

below, and it might have been the cold air that made Marshal Love's eyes fill with moisture as he came out of the office to greet me.

Quite a crowd had gathered to see me off, some of them never expecting to see me again.

Marshal Love was in his overcoat and dressed for the trail. "I'm going to ride a little way out on the trail with you, Bert," he said. "There are a few last things I want to say to you alone."

With the Marshal perched on top of the load, we were off. I ground the brake into the hard-packed snow with all my strength to hold back my dogs, but at that it was a wild ride. We came to Front Street, made the turn on one runner, crossed the bridge over the Chena River, and were approaching the St. Joseph hospital.

Marshal Love called to me,

"Isn't there a little matter you want to attend to here, before you go?"

I looked blankly at him. Then realization came. I had been so intent on the trip I had completely forgotten to say good-by to one of the nurses. No, I wasn't in love with her, you understand. We'd just had a few suppers and dances together, but somehow Marshal Love seemed to think it was up to me to tell her good-by, so we stopped, and Belle came out a bit on the trail with us. She brought along a little bundle—a couple of trail shirts of mine she had asked me for some time back. I learned why long afterward, out there in that silent wilderness.

My going seemed to hit them both pretty hard.

"I'm coming back," I said. "Don't you worry, either of you."

"I'm going to have my picture with you and the dogs," she said, "anyway."

"Shucks, Belle, we can get a better one when I'm back."

But she clung to me. "Right now!"

Well, I looked down into those big eyes of hers, turned up at me, and gosh, I didn't have the heart to refuse her, if it took the rest of the day. You will understand me and take it in the right way, you folks that have owned dogs, when I say some dogs have them—big, trusting, pleading eyes, just sort of begging you to love them. Well, that was Isabelle. I kissed her good-by and my boss threw his arm around me with a quick, tight embrace—then a wave of the hand, and I was off!

I'm telling you all this because I know Marshal Love thought a lot of me and I'm proud of it; and as for Isabelle—well—

On the way out to the Hospital, Marshal Love had said to me:

"If Cornell can take you to that body, you go get it, and don't come back without it. That's official. Now as to those Indians. When you get in there, if they molest you, you tell Chief Christian for me that if you don't turn up when I think you should, I'll lead all the soldiers at Fort Gibbon in there and clean 'em up! You can tell him that's official too, and that's just what I'll do. Good luck go with you, boy, and if you get in a jam, the whole force of the Law stands back of you!"

The trail road over the hill to Goldstream Creek was good going to the little mining town of Fox; thence my way led up Fox Gulch to the Dome. From the Dome, down Dome Creek, the trail was badly cut up by heavy wood sleds, causing me all kinds of hard travel with my heavily loaded sled frequently sliding to the side of the trail and capsizing. I reached Chatanika long after dark, completely tired out. I had heaved and pushed and dragged that eight hundred pound load back on to the trail so many times that I kept right on at it most of the hours I spent trying to sleep. But forty miles of my journey lay behind me. I had made schedule time the first day, at least.

The trail was so bad—not sufficient snow to make it smooth going, and full of niggerheads—that I took to the Chatanika River. The ice was good, and the going faster, although the distance was longer to the Cassier Road House, where I planned to stop for the night.

I was just putting down a huge moose steak and enjoying the chance to rest when all hell broke loose in the kennels. Swanson, the proprietor, came busting in.

“Get out there! That damned dog of yours . . . !”

Well, Major had broken loose and was trying to murder all the dogs in the kennel, that’s all. Ginger was pretty badly chewed up. Maybe he’d tried to play one of his dog jokes on Major. If he had, he picked the wrong dog—and found it out in a hurry.

My steak was stone cold and I went to bed with one ear on the kennels, but the night passed off quietly.

On November 12th, I figured to make George

Loper's, and I did. He gave me his usual greeting—closed door, and I knew he was sitting behind it with his gun across his lap—until he recognized me. The poor old coot actually seemed glad to see me. After we had supper he went back to his chair, gun across his knees as always. I wondered what was on his mind—funny guy, not long on conversation but I'll bet he was hell for action if need be! Looking at him I could picture his fathers before him, sitting at the door of a Tennessee mountain cabin—maybe shooting a feud enemy from ambush. That was the sort of thing that was born in old George, that gleamed way back in his black eyes.

Thank goodness he didn't offer to bake a cake for me. I'd have had to eat it, and no fooling, I'd rather go out and have a round with Major! Once I happened at Loper's on my birthday, and he made me a cake, from memory, a memory of how his mother used to do it. He had never made a cake and he hadn't seen his mother for forty years. Well, I like to forget the cake and think of the tribute behind it.

My next stopping-place was Eagle. From Loper's I followed a good trail up Faith Creek to my good friends, the Garners. They didn't run a regular road-house, but their door was always open to the cold and weary musher, and it sure was a haven of rest for me that night. Ed had mining interests that he worked during the summer months. He was out, lantern in hand, as soon as he heard my dogs.

"Hey, there, musher!"

"Hello yourself. It's Bert Hansen."

"Bert . . . well, you old son-of-a-gun! What in tar-nation are you doing here this time of the year? Wait, I'll give you a hand with the dogs."

While we got them out of their harness, and kenneled, for the night, I told him. He didn't say anything until I had finished, then: "I don't like it. Clarke's been froze there a year and a half, you say. Well, let him stay a year and a half longer. Won't hurt him."

I tried to explain to him the importance of my mission, but from then to the time I left, he couldn't see the sense of it. When I told Mrs. Garner, she took one good, long look at me, and said, "There's no use in trying to talk you out of it, Bert. You're going. I see it in your face that you are going. Well, fill up! You'll probably get good and tired of your own cooking before you get back here again." Which truth I don't need to deny.

Eagle Pass, six miles from Garner's, is the highest pass in the Interior of Alaska. Ed helped me over it. Of course it was a bitter cold day, as always happens. Ed took a look at the approaching storm, and wanted me to stay over. The wind was terrible, and the ground was just bare enough of snow to pull the heart out of my faithful dogs. We were five hours making it over the pass, a distance of fourteen miles.

In reality, there is no such thing as an Eagle Pass. There is no pass to it. It is just one long, steep hump, sitting there, right smack in your way. If you were to try to go around it, you'd travel two hundred miles

or more, following Birch Creek, which ends finally in Yukon Flats, just below Circle City.

No, you can't go round the sucker. There she is, one of Alaska's pleasant little pastimes for the musher. And wind—gad, how that wind blows. There are days on end when you simply can't cross it.

The hill is so steep that in spite of the fact that Garner took nine dogs, and I had thirteen, and he loaded his sled with a part of my load, we still couldn't drive our dogs more than a hundred yards without stopping to let them rest.

And when you hit the top, your fun begins. She's straight down, for over four miles to where you hit Miller Creek. And believe me, if you don't rough-lock your sled, and unhitch all your dogs but the leader—well, you sure *bit* Miller Creek, take it from me!

At last we got to the top, re-loaded my sled; rough-locked it with four chains, turned all the dogs loose but Tuesday—and, at that, Old Tues ran like hell, believe me, to keep out of the way of the sled. At the bottom I hitched in my dogs again and we were whirling down Miller Creek. Now the wind was at my back, helping me on, and the dogs were put to it to keep the sled from running over them.

One of the delays incident to such trips happened when one of the dogs stumbled. Before he could regain his footing the rest of the team, sled and myself, piled on top of him. Major, of course, took the opportunity to attempt wholesale massacre. Why did I keep that

dog? Sometimes I might say, darned if I know, and again, when the tale is told, you'll understand without my telling you why I'm glad I did.

Well, there were the dogs to untangle, and the load to straighten out. Let me say right now, unless you've been on the trail, you can't know how every little thing is just five times as hard to do as it is in civilization; and there's always the menace of the cold, of frozen hands.

I stopped that night at Miller Road House, fifty-two miles from Circle City. My next stop was at Wilson's, fourteen miles from Circle. I would have made it all the way into Circle except for my load. Everywhere I stopped I gathered a good lot of advice, and as always happens, the most of it, from people who had never been anywhere near where I was going.

The next morning I got into Circle City, where John Cornell was. "Now," I thought, "I'll be getting down to straight facts about this body."

I hunted around town for Cornell and found him at Fred Newbaker's road-house, where he was stopping. Fred told me right off that Cornell had been drinking, but that he had kept sober that day, as he was expecting me.

Cornell was a typical old sour-dough, who had spent some fifteen years up in that country. He was an inoffensive chap, inclined to exaggerate a bit, but he would never do so intentionally to anyone's hurt. He was fifty years of age, certainly not less than that, weighed about a hundred and forty pounds, had reddish hair,

blue eyes and always clean shaved. He was the typical prospector, had a pretty good line of gab and talked incessantly.

"Well, John," I said, "here I am."

"Have a drink."

"Nope. I don't drink when I'm on the trails. You better cut it, too, John. As soon as we can go over your route, we want to outfit and get going."

His answer was to pour himself a good stiff drink.

"Now, John," I said, "just where is Clarke's body?"

"It's right there where I told your Marshal in my wire. Lyin' there in the bed of the stream on the headwaters of Wind River."

"You know exactly where it is?"

"Sure. Didn't I find it?"

"That's great. Then we can go right to it!"

Old John choked on his drink and the liquor spilled over his shirt. He set the glass down and looked at me.

"Say that again," he said.

"Why, you're to go with me," I said. "What's the matter—?"

"Nothing . . . nothing. I was . . . Hell, I've told you right where it is. I just came from up there and I ain't going back again."

"Oh yes you are, John. Marshal's orders! Now, let's get down to cases!"

CHAPTER IV

CIRCLE CITY

WELL, I want to tell you those couple of days I spent at Circle City were darbs. Without going into a lot of details, I might say that old John was not at all keen for the trip, and the more I talked to him about Clarke's body, the less I knew. He kept drinking off and on, and wanted me to drink with him.

But drinking and trailing don't go hand in hand. Whisky, thought to be such a good thing for exposure, is merely valuable as a quick pick-up. It will most certainly bring a man out of it when he has been frozen almost into insensibility; will jerk his heart into action and stimulate the circulation, but, as an antidote against the cold, hot tea is far better.

No . . . too much whisky and Alaska don't get along successfully. There was Old Red, and there was that young chap, a fine, clean young fellow just in from the States he was, too. I found him sitting straight up, leaning against his sled at the side of the trail; two of his dogs were lying down in harness, the rest had chewed themselves out.

Cheechako . . . got cold . . . somebody who didn't know had told him to take a bottle of whisky along for emergency . . . he was all in . . . the cold was getting to him anyway . . . warmed a bit by the al-

cohol, he sat down to rest . . . and Alaska's treacherous, frigid arms slipped about him . . . held him. A young boy, clean and good to look at.

Whisky weakens a man's resistance to cold. I seldom carried it; once in a while, on a long mush like the one I was on now, I took some good, old rum, as much a heartener, though, as a revivifier. But I never indulged to any extent. So I tried to get Cornell to cut out the liquor. It was certainly not the diet to harden one for a mush like the one we were in for.

"That's no way to get ready for a trip like this, John," I told him.

I questioned him about the body as we sat around the road house that night, trying to get some accurate ideas as to distances. He and I went over the map again and again, only to have him throw it aside with disgust.

"Them pencil tracks are all wrong," he'd say. "I know how far I traveled and where I went and if my distances don't jibe with them maps, it ain't my fault."

So that was that.

Now in fairness to Cornell, I want to say that he had been in that country the summer before. At least he had been somewhere up there in that arctic region taking the census. He was a skookum man on the trail, had traveled for years throughout the country and there was therefore no reason to doubt him. The maps, as we all knew, were way off, which wasn't strange, inasmuch as there had never been over a dozen or so men all told in there.

The next day I went to work searching out, in Circle City, the various supplies I could not get in Fairbanks. That night I said to Cornell, "John, did you stop at the Chandalar village when up in there?"

"Yeah."

"Did you say anything to them about finding Clarke's body?"

"Think I'm a fool?"

We talked on and on and finally Cornell let slip the fact that he had had an Indian guide when up there.

"That's fine," I said. "We'll dig him up and get him to go in with us. What was his name?"

"Aw, he wasn't in *there* with me. I left him a hundred miles back on the trails and picked him up again when I came out on my return trip."

So—that was that!

But I looked at old John a long time, studying him. Finally, I said, "You mean to tell me, John, that you mushed two hundred miles, over and back, in that country, alone?"

He took a drink and looked a long time at the bottle, and then, wiping his mouth, said, "Yep. Goldarn you, that's just what I did. Now, what do you think of that?"

Well, I can tell you, I lay awake most of the night thinking of that! At dawn I began getting my things together, and warned Cornell to have his dogs ready so we could leave the next morning for Fort Yukon. I wasn't worried, mind you. But I was more or less up in the air. According to Cornell we had a long, hard

mush to make; the distances were greater than I had figured. If he was right, then the map of Alaska would certainly need a lot of changing.

I spent a busy day, but even here, I could not get all I needed, and realized I was faced with another delay in Fort Yukon. What I couldn't get there, well, I'd simply have to go without.

Circle City is an interesting place. At one time it was the largest log-cabin town in the world. In the early eighties gold was discovered on Deadwood Creek, back of Circle City. This was long before the discovery in the Klondike, at Nome, or at Fairbanks. As a result of this discovery men flocked to Circle City from all over the world. But now Circle City was dead. A few straggling log cabins (the others had long since been broken up for firewood), a trading post or two and a couple of saloons. Circle City lies on the Yukon River where it comes out of the rolling hill country and enters a stretch which shortly becomes known as the Yukon Flats.

We got started off the next morning all right. I searched Cornell's sled to see that he did not have any whisky cached. We would be entering an Indian Reservation when we hit Fort Yukon where it was illegal to transport liquor. I found four quarts in his sled and ditched them. Then, we were off.

The mush down the Yukon was one of the most beautiful trails I have ever covered. The air was cold, full of frost, and the ice, rough in spots, making it hard going. But, winding our way in and out of the many

small islands in the river, it was an ever-changing picture of beautiful scenery. The trees and brush were covered with a heavy frost, almost like a fresh snow, but finer and lacier. We were mushing through a fairyland, and the breath of the dogs, rising in little clouds, to hang a few feet suspended over their heads, gave added beauty to it all. In the afternoon we stopped at Joe Roemaker's for lunch. Joe is famous for the salmon bellies he puts up and we enjoyed his good food to the limit. That night we camped far down into the flats on a small island.

It was much colder the next morning and fog was rising here and there on the river, sure signs of overflows, which with ice-hummocks made slow going from then onward. In spite of our watchfulness my entire team, with the exception of Major, got into an overflow and I had a sweet time cleaning up their toes. We camped that night at an old mail-cabin. Cornell was in bad shape by this time . . . the sort of depression that comes over a man when he's been drinking steadily and suddenly quits. He crabbed all the time about making too long and too hard mushes, but I wanted to get into Fort Yukon before the storm, which I felt was brewing. A heavy snow would mean breaking new trail on snowshoes.

The next night we stopped with a man named Phoney Cook, short for Phonograph, and given him because when he started talking he was sure to keep going until he ran down! I want to say right here that this idea about women being big talkers is all wrong. The

greatest gabbers I ever knew were men—and the greatest gossips too.

Phoney and old John spent a lot of time going over our plans. In fact they made the trip in and out at least a half-dozen times that night. Gosh, I was so darned tired I could have gone to sleep standing in my shoes, and those two old-timers kept at it until almost midnight. Finally I pitched a boot at the table.

"Hell's fire, get through there, will you, and let's get some sleep," I yelled.

They grumbled but put out the light and went to bed.

Next day, out on the trail, Cornell tried to tell me what a wonderful chap Cook was, the cleverest on the Yukon. Those two certainly had an understanding.

About an hour out on the trail and Cornell began to complain again about my long mushes. I figured I was in for a nice, sweet time with him when we finally got out into real country. I wanted to get into Fort Yukon not later than November 21st, and I was already two days behind my schedule. I had the feeling all the time that I was dragging Cornell along against his will.

We spent the next night at Dave Murphy's camp, thirty-two miles above the Fort. I was afraid we were not going to make it, but we did, getting in just before the snow started. Dave was not at home, but we made ourselves welcome.

The next day I broke trail on snow-shoes. Doing this one has to mush ahead, breaking and packing the

trail, then mush back again to his team. You can imagine how fast you can go ahead that way. It is discouraging work to go back over your own footsteps when you have but one idea—to get ahead as fast as you can—but that's the way things are done in Alaska. She's a great patience teacher.

Bless Old Tues! He was always right behind me, never halting, never swerving, unless the sled got hung up on a jag of ice, or upset. I left Cornell far in the rear. I knew I was in for a lovely time if I had to make the whole mush at his team's speed.

They talk a lot about the white lights of New York, but I'll bet they never looked as good to a city guy, as the lights of Fort Yukon did to me that night. First you see them through the clear, cold air, like fairy lanterns, beckoning onward; then you swing around a bend of the river or an island and they blink out, only to appear again, beckoning onward. Then they get bigger, nearer . . . then you're there! It's great! It means shelter, warmth, food, rest, you can then dare to lie down, to let go . . . something you can't do on the trail, unless you're figuring on making it a permanent stop.

We put up at Jim Haley's road-house. Old Jim's Black River wife, Mary, round and fat, and beaming welcome, was a comforting sight. She bustled around getting us food, and if there is anything more hospitable than that type of Indian woman, I have yet to see it.

The dogs were all in, poor devils, so I gave them double rations. We hung our wet clothing on the drying

rack behind the stove, and then sat around and "chewed the fat" about the trip.

Jim and John were old cronies. Both old-timers in the country, and if one liked his liquor better than the other, neither knew it. Jim Haley was a former Hudson's Bay man, at the time that the Indians claimed this part of Alaska, and was located at the head of the Porcupine River. There is still an old Hudson's Bay post up there. Jim had formerly been factor of one of these posts. He was a little Irishman, got around quickly, talked the native language like it was his own, and was chief cook and bottle washer of that entire territory. He was the whole works. He had one fault, he liked whisky, plenty of it—and all the time.

Right after dinner I went out to hunt up Jim McInroy and Harry Horton, both traders. I found them and we had gabfest for a while; not long, because I wanted to turn in early and get a good night's sleep, but it was long enough to let old John and Jim get started on a heated argument. When I got back they were sure going good.

I hit my bunk and tried my best to get some sleep. I was pretty tired.

The next day I spent around the village searching for supplies. I learned one thing that made me feel better. Both Horton and McInroy told me no Chandalar Indian had been in the Post for two months. If that were true then the Chandalars were more than likely ignorant of the finding of the body.

I got back to the road-house after supper-time that

night and found Cornell and Haley re-making old John's trip into the Wind River. Old Mary's red tablecloth lay on the floor in the center of the room. Pipes going, the two sat at the table on which Haley had spread my map of Alaska. Haley had a pencil and as Cornell talked he marked distances. If it hadn't been so vital to me, it would have been funny. Haley was in one of those Irish, skeptical moods and full of cutting sarcasm. Pipe in the corner of his mouth, he'd make a mark, then look up through the smoke. "Go wan!" he'd order.

"Then from Christian City you mush five days, say thirty miles a day, and you are where I crossed the divide on to the East Fork of the Chandalar."

Haley bent over the map and worked diligently.

"Go wan!"

"Then you travel up the East Fork two days and a half and you are on Wind River."

Mumbling, Haley made more painstaking notations.

"Go wan!"

"You follow up Wind River toward the mountains. Figger we made the same amount of trail the first day. The next day we had to swing west to avoid a portage, then north again for four days . . . and there you are!"

Haley bent over the map, checked his distances, then threw down his pencil with a grunt. Out of narrow eyes he peered at Cornell.

"D'ye know where ye found that feller?" he demanded.

"Course I know where I found him! Right where I'm telling you!"

"Yeah. Sure! Ye swam right out to him."

"I never swum nothing."

"You bet ye never swam nothin'. D'ye know where ye are, by ye're own figgerin'? Ye're in the Arctic Ocean. I suppose ye'll be tellin' me next a whale spit him up same as one did that feller Jonah."

Cornell made a wild grab for the map, then shoved it aside with disgust.

"I don't give a damn what that map says or where it puts it. You ain't been fifty miles from the seat you're sitting on for so long you've forgot all you know about country. They's more country up there than you or them map fellows ever dreamed of. And don't you call me no liar. I can take you right to that body. Now you stop making pencil tracks on that paper or come along and let your betters show you something."

Haley turned, facing me, and stabbed at me with his pipe.

"Bert," he said warningly, "don't let this feller take ye up there unless ye take a boat wid ye. He's mor'n likely to drown ye, if he goes where he's talkin' about."

"Is that so?" shouted Cornell angrily. "What do you know about mushing, anyway? You ain't been there! Or anywhere near it!"

"Ye bet I ain't been where ye're talking about. I know ye ain't had a salt bath recent, which ye sure would have had if ye'd gone where yer's talkin' 'bout."

Cornell's chair hit the floor. Tears, induced by his anger and the liquor he had been consuming, coursed down his lined cheeks.

"If that's the way you want to talk about an old pardner, then I ain't going to tell you no more 'bout it. That's all the thanks a man gets from a lot of chair warmers when he comes back from a long mush into unknown country—"

"Huh!" snorted Haley, unmoved by the tears. Then to me, "If he hadn't had a couple of Indians wid him, he couldn't go out in his own back yard widout gettin' lost. Huh, him a musher! Look at the spavined old sour-dough. John, me bye, I know ye, cry and be damned to ye, ye old baby."

Then bringing his big, hairy fist down on the table with a bang that brought Mary's fat face to a crack in the door, he roared: "'Tis wan thing makes me think ye made that mush at all, John Cornell. And that's the daffy way ye're carryin' on! Ye must have mushed clear to the North Pole and the domned thing fell on ye're head. And that's that!"

Pretty soon I thought it was time to interfere. As men do, who are old cronies, they were indulging in the most profane and personal comments. If I repeated half the two old friends said that night they'd shoot me the first time I mushed back into Fort Yukon! They didn't mean a word of it; it was simply their way of expressing their differences of opinion about a country which they, like myself, were keenly interested in.

I lay awake most of the night, however, worrying.

I always hate a mush where I have to depend entirely on another man's judgment!

I dismissed the idea of attempting to take sleds into the arctic. There were no trails, the country abounded in thick, small, scrub timber for miles back of Fort Yukon, in fact between there and the foothills that lay two hundred miles to the north. From there on, it would be, of course, absolutely unknown country. I spent another day getting ready, looking for supplies and hunting for old-timers who might be able to give me pointers on the country. In this I drew a blank. No one knew anything about that section.

It seemed to me that Cornell showed a decided unwillingness to get ready to travel. When I told him we'd try and get out the next day, he seemed to take the news anything but joyfully. I left the road-house with a frown on my forehead, but thinking it over I didn't blame him. I wasn't crazy about this mush myself.

I managed to locate three toboggans that morning. Two with gee lines and one with handle-bars. Two had walrus-hide carry-alls, the other was just a bare toboggan with rope lashings. Two were seven feet long and ten inches wide, the other nine foot by ten inches. I arranged for them to be completely overhauled and the sliding surfaces polished with boiling linseed oil. This so the snow would not stick and bunch up on the bottoms. There seemed to be no end to the detail work. I was on the go from early in the morning until late at night, picking up the loose ends. I had it all to do alone,

besides having to listen to advice from every one I met. I was weary of it all.

My outfit was about as crude for such a trip as one could imagine. I had to do without a number of things that would have added to the chances of safety. But I'll never forget the help given me by those real friends, the kind one makes there in Alaska.

One night, as I had often done before, I dropped in to chin with old Mary for a few minutes. Her big, round face beaming with a broad, happy smile, as she held out to me a pair of arctic muckluks. Pointing to my moccasined feet, she said, "Them no good. You freeze, catch die. These . . . good for cold country."

I took the muckluks and examined them closely, under old Mary's beaming eyes. They were a beautiful piece of work . . . knee length, made with heavy moose-hide foot and soft, light, unborn caribou leggings, with the hair turned inside. In these she had tucked a pair of very soft caribou slipper socks to be worn next the foot instead of the customary wool socks sold in the stores. I want to tell you I could not thank that old girl enough.

Smiling from ear to ear, she waddled off and brought back to show me two more pairs of socks in the process of making. I sat down, removed my footwear and tried on her new gifts, and I don't think I could have done anything that would have carried to her my appreciation as did this simple act.

To offer pay would have been an insult. They were a token of friendship. I caught her around her fat, old

waist and gave her a good hug which I think was hard enough to show some measure of my gratitude. But Lordy, what that let me in for! Beaming, beady eyes sparkling, she looked up at me. "Bert," she said, in her soft, broken English, "I got sister . . . fine girl . . . oh . . . ah."

It is hard to get over the sound of it. One has to hear that long-drawn, sighing, Indian inflection . . . a humming croon it is, far softer than that of a negro mammy.

"You have, Mary!" I said, pretending interest.

"Uh-huh. My sister, she so good . . . so fat . . . so big . . . so nice . . . oo . . . ooh . . . so-o-o nice."

She held out her fat arms to show just how big and how fat and how nice her sister really was. I gathered that sister was bigger than Mary, and if so, she was going some. When, after repeated descriptions my interest was not sufficiently stirred, she brought the subject up at the table, thinking, I feel sure, to stir my interest through competition. Finally one of the gang did say, "Well, Mary, bring her on. I'll take a look at her."

But Mary shook her head. "Um . . . ah . . . no . . . not for you . . . no . . . no!" And then she would look at me. Once, when this little comedy had been played, and Mary had gone to the kitchen to replenish the dishes Harry Horton said to me, "Say, by golly, Bert, it might not be so bad. Why don't you take a look at her, anyway. They make good wives!"

But somehow, there came a vision of two big brown

eyes filled with tears and I heard again: "I'm going to have a picture of you and the dogs anyway," and Mary's sister was forgotten.

Harry Horton had his young Indian wife make me a pair of the finest lynx-foot mittens I have ever seen, and Mrs. Elliott, white woman, and one of the finest *God ever put the breath of life into, insisted on washing such clothes as I had worn.* While this seems a very small matter, let me tell you what it means.

Underwear, socks, all garments that come into contact with the skin, washed with hard, strong soap, give a man no end of trouble and misery on the trail. Mushing is hard work and the colder the weather the easier it is to perspire; and the soap left in the clothing irritates and burns the skin, causing extreme discomfort.

Mrs. Elliott also cooked my beans, a hundred pounds of the large, brown variety, using a wash-boiler and salted water and then spread them on bed-sheets out in the open to freeze. This, too, may sound like a trifling service, but to cook raw beans on the trail would always require time, and often would be impossible. All you have to do with cooked beans is to throw them in a frying pan with a little grease until they thaw; then they are ready to eat.

Paraffin bags, used to carry flour, sugar, rice, and so forth, are an absolute necessity, for snow would soon ruin such foods unless in moisture-proof containers. But failing to find anything that I could use for the purpose, I took my problem to Mrs. Elliott. She found some new canvas tarpaulin and out of it made bags,

waterproofing them with paraffin, sufficient to hold all my supplies.

Again, to offer pay for all this—well, it just simply could not be done. One cannot buy friendship nor the offices of friendship in the North.

Again I had to change all my dog harness, for I had driven double from Fairbanks to Fort Yukon, now I would have to drive single file with the toboggans. It meant rebuilding twelve sets, and making each harness fit each dog properly. These are but a few of the half-hundred details. When I finally got it all assembled the total weight of my outfit was thirteen hundred and eighty-five pounds, consisting of dog feed, grub, tent, stove and stove pipe, clothing, axes, guns, first-aid outfit, and any number of little odds and ends. Nothing could be overlooked and it was tiresome, tedious work getting it all together, checking of each item, then going over and over it to see that nothing essential had been left behind. When my dogs pulled out of Fort Yukon I would have to live off my sled and the country for months, with no one on whom to depend in case of trouble, save old John.

Ready at last, I decided I'd have it out with Cornell. He was the only white man who knew any more than the general impression that there was such a river as Wind River. Some men even held that the East Fork was the main branch of the Chandalar, which would make old John's distances at least seem more reasonable. Of course, I knew there was something wrong somewhere, but put it down to the fact that Cornell, like

many men mushing over virgin country, was not a good hand at estimating mileage. I had quizzed him on so many phases of the trip, had gotten so many answers that I didn't know what to believe or what to discard. One thing, however, he insisted on—he could take me right to the spot.

So now, all ready, I hunted him up.

"Now, John," I said, "I've waited patiently. While you've had your spree, I've packed and am ready to go. How long will it take us to get that body? Where exactly is Wind River? How many days' travel, and how many more up Wind River till we come to Clarke's body? First, then, where is Wind River?"

"I don't know where it is."

"What?"

"S'truth! I don't know where it is . . . no, sir!"

I looked at him in amazement.

"Just . . . what . . . do you mean?" I said sternly. "This is Government business, Cornell, and if you're saying that to get out of going . . . forget it. Now . . . *where* is this Wind River?"

"I don't know, I tell you. Hell's bells, can't you understand plain English. I don't know where the damn thing is!"

"Uh-huh!" I said absently. I was trying to put together a heap of thoughts that didn't make sense. He didn't know where Wind River was and Clarke's body was on Wind River, and I had to go get it. Suddenly I came to—my temper, never very good, got the best of me. I was on my feet.

“Do you mean to sit there, you old—” I yelled, “and tell me you don’t know where Wind River is?”

He nodded, the tears running down his cheeks.

“Didn’t you wire the Marshal that you found Clarke’s body on Wind River?” I bellowed.

He nodded.

“Then where the hell is it? If you’ve ever been on it you can go back to it. Now come out of it!”

“I tell you I don’t know where the damned river is,” he reiterated.

“Then where the hell is Clarke’s body?” I demanded, trying to grope through a maze.

“It’s right where I told you it was,” he insisted, looking up at me through his tears. “It’s on Wind River!”

“Fine! Clark’s body is on Wind River, but you don’t know where Wind River is. You found his body on Upper Wind River but you don’t know where the damned river is. Then where the hell are we going, will you tell me that?”

Like a flash the truth dawned on me. I looked down at him there as he sat, facing me, the tears streaming down the old fellow’s cheeks.

“John,” I said solemnly, “I’m going to ask you just one more question, and, by the Gods, you’re going to tell me the truth! Remember, you’re talking to a Deputy United States Marshal on Government business for which you are directly responsible. . . . Did you ever see Clarke’s body? The truth, now!”

“By God, I didn’t, Hansen! And that’s the truth!”

“Well,” I said, taking a long breath and feeling like I’d fallen into forty-below water, “this is lovely—damned lovely!”

“But it’s on Wind River.” Cornell’s voice cut through my reverie. “It’s truth! I never actually saw it, but it’s there.”

“Well, what the hell—” Words failed me. I stood there, inarticulate with rage. My mind speedily went back over the situation. Cornell’s telegram, the furor it had created in our office, the wire to Washington, and the final, hard-won telegram from the Attorney-General—why, the dod-rotted old rascal now had me up a tree. Here I was, well on my journey, all set to make a mush into unknown country with a man whom I supposed could guide me, and who now calmly admitted he had never seen the body, had never been on Wind River, but in the same breath claimed that the body was there.

“How the hell do you know his body is up there anywhere,” I demanded at last, “if you never saw it?” I was both puzzled and disgusted.

“Because Henderson told me it was!”

“And who is Henderson?”

“The trader at Flaxman Islands!”

“Flaxman Islands?”

“Yes, Flaxman Islands. He told me when I was up there taking the census this summer, and asked me to wire you folks as soon as I got back to Circle, which I did.”

“Yeah! You did. You said something in that wire

too, about having found the body and of covering it up so the animals couldn't get it."

"Well, he said he did!"

"He said he did what?"

"Henderson said he covered it so the animals wouldn't get it!"

"John," I said solemnly, "did you actually go to Flaxman Islands and did Henderson actually tell you that Clarke's body was on Wind River?"

"I did and he did," said Cornell. "Do you think I'm a liar?"

"I don't know what the hell to think, John, only that instead of knowing where I am going, I now don't even know if there is anything to go for—much less where it is."

"I tell you it's right there where I said. Henderson said he saw it, and that he thought Clarke had been murdered and asked me to tell you folks. I've done it, and you jump all over me."

"You ought to be jumped on with both feet! I'll bet you've told everybody you found Clarke's body. And now you say you didn't."

"Well, what's the difference? It's there somewhere."

"Yeah, it's there somewhere. The only difference is, now I've got to cross the mountains and go clear to Flaxman Islands to find out where that somewhere is. Do you realize this is the middle of winter, and that not a white man has ever been over that range in the winter."

"Well, listen," he said, "Wind River is the tributary

of the East Fork of the Chandalar, ain't it? Henderson says it is, and he ought to know. All right. East Fork means east, so she must run east of the North Fork. That's logic, ain't it? Well then, it's somewhere up there this side of the Endicotts."

"Sure," I said. "And which one of those rivers is the head-waters of the East Fork and which one of those many rivers is Wind River? And where the hell along an unknown river is the body of a man, covered up probably under a lot of snow. Yeah, it's a nice job you've wished on me."

"Well," said Cornell, "I done my duty. I wired your office as I promised Henderson I would. But, listen, Hansen," his voice suddenly serious, "if I was you I'd leave Clarke up there."

"Now what?" I said.

"Better not try to go in there and get it. Better let it rot!"

"Why?"

"'Cause I don't like them Indians. Think they're going to let you get out with it, if they killed him?"

"What do you know of the Chandalar?"

"I know what I've heard, and that's enough. I ain't going in there. D'you know any white man that's gone in an' come out again? You bet you don't, nor I don't. You better let Clarke alone."

"Thanks, John," I said, "but we'll be leaving on the twenty-eighth. Be sure and be ready."

Old John hit the ceiling, said he wasn't going and meant it. I was mad enough to have deputized him and

made him go, but the more I thought of it, the more it seemed to me that, in the light of what I now knew, I would need at my back some man who went willingly, and who could out-travel Cornell. I wanted the most skookum man I could find, so I finally told old John I wouldn't make him go.

"What kind of country is that up there, John?" I asked him.

"It's just plain hell, that's all! I've been there once. I ain't lost nothing up there that will ever take me back into it. And that's that, Marshal or no Marshal!"

"All right, John," I said. "You stay here and rot. If Clarke's body is up there I'm going to get it. But I warn you, and this you may consider official. Keep your trap closed about that body or anything connected with it. If I ever learn you've spilled the beans so's the Chandalar's get wind of my coming or the reason I'm in their country . . . and I get out . . . sure's hell you're going to pay for it!"

With that I left him.

CHAPTER V

AN INDIAN TRAIL BREAKER

WELL, I was in a nice mess. The more I thought about it, the more I decided Cornell was not the man to take along. I could probably find some Indian who could guide me in there; but under the circumstances, could an Indian of another tribe be trusted on such a trip?

I was determined to succeed. The more people tried to stop me, the more I swore I'd do it, for somehow I couldn't see myself falling down for the first time on anything I started out to do for the office. Could I let the fact that John Cornell had failed me make me turn back and report myself and my mission a failure? Not without a whack at it, anyway!

I dropped in to see McInroy and told him Cornell's story.

"I'm nae surprised," he said. "John is a wee bit inclined to exaggeration at times."

"Well, this time he's sure played hell with me and my plans," I said.

McInroy took his pipe from his mouth and studied me for a long time. He had shaggy brows and keen, penetrating eyes that seemed to bore clear through a fellow. Then, gesturing with his pipe stem, he said:

"I'm no called upon to advise ye. But yon's a tough

bit o' country. No trails, no white men, and 'tis settin' in for a har-rd winter or I meestake all o' the signs. Be sensible, mon, an' leave that body there!"

"I can't do that, Mac," I said.

"Do ye ken how Chief Christian is going to welcome ye?"

"I'm hoping he won't know anything about it until I've got Clarke's body and am out of there."

"Ye're daft, mon! Yon's his country. No white man's been in there. D'ye ken? And no white mon's goin' over yon without him knowin' he's comin'! From the time he knows that fact he's goin' to be rackin' o' his brain to know the reason. Yon mon's no fool. He's got brains to rack. And, ye can take it from me, an' I know the mon, he's sae canny he'll have it all figgered out before you ever get to his village. Mind, I'm not sayin' what's talk here, that Chief Christian or any of his people will go to molest ye. But, d'ye know any mon that's come back from up there? Ye don't? Nae mair do I!"

"I can't help that, Mac," I said. "If I *knew* he knew I was coming, and what I'm after, I'd go just the same! It's orders. What's worrying me is who I can get to guide me, or at least go with me? I can't handle my outfit alone. Do you know any one who has been up that way that I could hire to make the mush with me?"

He puffed thoughtfully. The pipe came again from his lips.

"I ken a mon. 'Tis a possibeelity. Have ye by any chance heered of a mon named Owens?"

I shook my head.

"A big strappin' young chap. Knows that country up yon a ways. Might go. I'll send out to locate him. Talk to him. A good mon. Square in business."

We chatted for perhaps half an hour. Then into the trading-post came the clerk and behind him a huge, young chap, good looking, clean cut, dressed in trail garments. I sized him up as the clerk led him back to the office. What I saw impressed me favorably. He was about six feet, 190 pounds, young, light hair, blue eyes, a good, big husky. He had the appearance of a man who knew the trails, was at home on them. Any Alaskan will know what I mean.

As Owens entered the office, McInroy greeted him and introduced us.

"Hansen here has a hard trip before him. Into the Chandalar country. He wants some one to go weeth him. I thought you two might get together."

"Do you know that country up there?" I asked Owens.

"No, can't say that I do, except by hearsay. I know the country fifty miles or so beyond Old Caro. I made one mush almost to the foothills of Christian Divide. But I have never been any farther."

"Would you like to make a trip in there?"

"I might. What's it all about?"

"I'll tell you that if you are interested enough to go?" I said.

"What's the proposition?"

"Trail man. Help me get in and out of there. Government business. About two months at the outside.

Fair outfit. Good dogs, but heavy load. Have to push things. I need an A-1 trail man. You look like you could qualify."

"What wages?"

"Ten dollars a day and grub."

"All right. I'll go."

We shook hands on it.

"What are you going up there for?"

I swore him to secrecy and explained. He nodded.
"When do you want to go?"

"I'm a week behind my schedule. I want to get away in the morning. Can you make it?"

"I guess so. Just us two? There's no broken trails up there! You should have a trail breaker."

McInroy spoke up. "I ken a young Indian who knows a bit about that country. Young buck. Might be the man you want."

"Chandalar?" I asked.

"No. Ramparts. From Stephens Village. I'll locate him." Then to the Clerk, "Find Jaimiss!"

A little later I was talking to this young Indian, Jaimiss.

"You from Stephens Village?"

He nodded.

"You savvy Chandalar?"

"Once, me little, me go Big Lake. Way off there!"
pointing to the north wall of the trading-post.

"Can you find it again?"

"Mebby-so. When you go?"

"To-morrow. This Big Lake. Where is it?"

"Him Chandalar live there."

"All right. We go to-morrow."

He thought a long time, staring straight ahead, as if visualizing that trip made so long a time ago in his youth. I had a good chance to study him. He was a small youth, about twenty to twenty-two years of age. Rather dark, but pleasant-featured and seemed to be good-natured.

Finally, beady eyes swung back to me, and a grin lit up his face.

"All right. Me go. How much you pay?"

"How about five dollars a day?"

This was mighty big pay for an Indian, anywhere. He considered it, turning it over and over in his mind, then shook his head.

"No."

"That's good money. You make big money. We go many days, mebbby so we be gone a month, two months."

Again he shook his head.

"No! Five dollar him not much pay. Me no go!"

He turned and started out of the office. McInroy hissed at me, beckoned with the ever present pipe-stem.

"Offer him sae much a month, mon, or ye'll lose him."

"Hey, wait a moment, Jaimiss," I called. He turned back.

"I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll give you a hundred dollars a month if you will break trail for us?"

A grin from ear to ear.

"All right, me go. To-morrow, here!"

Still grinning, he was gone. I looked at McInroy.

"Sure, he'll be on hand," he grunted. "Good boy. That settles everything."

"Well, I'll go and get my outfit together," said Owens. "All I need, I suppose, is my own clothing and rifle."

I nodded and he left, leaving me to chat with McInroy. I expressed my thanks to the old Scotch trader, which he waved aside, listened again to his warning about the Chandalaras, and went back to Jim Haley's.

We left Fort Yukon before daylight. Jaimiss ahead, breaking trail, myself next with five dogs and the nine-foot toboggan. Owens brought up the rear with eight dogs and the two toboggans. He was very heavily loaded. But we talked it over before starting and decided this was the best way to travel. The snow was deep and soft and would be, for days. Jaimiss ahead to break trail, me following as close as I could with my load. We were to forget about Owens unless we came to some obstacle that would give him trouble, in which case we were to wait and help him over the trouble. Then we would go on again.

In this way we could make good time, and Jaimiss and I could have camp pitched and supper ready when Owens came in.

Jaimiss, a wonder as a trail breaker, steady, mushing ahead and then back over his trail to pack it down to a somewhat solid foundation for my dogs, always good-natured; and Owens, big, two-fisted man, hard as nails, to follow over a trail we had pounded into good

shape with our heavy toboggan; it looked like a good outfit. I told them in Fort Yukon they could expect me back about Christmas, by New Year's anyway. I advised the office in the last report I would be able to send, that they could look for me about the sixth to tenth of January. Lord—what I didn't know then about the country I was heading into!

I had made quite a change in my line-up. I began using Candy, a very light Malemute, for leader, and gave Old Tuesday to Owens. This was the first time I ever allowed any one else to drive my faithful pal. But the trail was so soft I had to have my light dogs in front, and then, too, I felt that Tuesday would be invaluable to Owens. If anything happened to separate us, I depended on Old Tues to smell out our trail and finally bring Owens in. But honest, that dog had such a reproachful look in his eyes that I could hardly bear it. A fellow feels that way about a dog he's mushed thousands of miles behind!

In contrast to Tuesday's affectionate eyes, were Major's baleful ones. That devil! He treated me as though I didn't exist, even out there where we were all alone in white, sullen wilderness. He was willing, pulled his head off, but there he was silently fighting me, as he was fighting the load, the wilderness, his mates, the whole world, all the time. Queer duck, Major!

Out there in that vast silence it seemed to me that he typified the Northland. She can be made to serve you, but never can man say that he has conquered her! Around the corner somewhere death is always waiting.

Major and I were like two wild spirits fighting a grim relentless land that in turn was always watching the chance to beat us.

Three men, alone under a star-lit canopy of whirling worlds, three black dots in an ocean of white, hugging a sheet iron stove for warmth, daring to mush on into the vast unknown, where the aurora borealis, with its long, flaming banners of light seemed to beckon, our journey's end, the skeleton temple of what had once been a man!

Somehow, that night, I had a presentiment that this was my last mush. Candy crept inside the tent and curled up around my feet. Brave little spirit! Half as big as the others, but a heart as big as the immensity surrounding us!

Now, I wasn't what folks call a good Christian. I'm only a dog musher and never joined any religious organization. But somewhere up there in that vast network of stars swinging low, somewhere above the flaming aurora that seemed so close we could almost touch it, was the answer if I could only read it! We had been ten long hours on the trail and then had to make camp not over fifteen miles from Fort Yukon. Owens came in shortly after we had unloaded.

"My load's too damned heavy," he said.

"I know it, Owens. So's my toboggan."

"We can't make this trail unless we get rid of some of it!"

I explained again to him that everything we had was only what would be needed, that I had cut it so fine we

would be without a lot of things before we got back. He admitted all this, but still insisted we were overloaded. All of which I knew well enough, but there was nothing to do about it. Later we expected to make caches of some of our supplies for the return trip. That would help the loads.

We were all stiff and sore the next morning. However, we broke camp and were on the trail two hours before daylight. The days were short now, the sun so far away that when we did see it there was no warmth in it, not even in its looks. Daylight came about nine o'clock, and it was dark again at three-thirty. The sky was clear, and it was getting colder.

We camped next night near a little swamp-like lake, and chopped ice from it to melt for drinking water. We were traveling north from the Yukon Flat section, heading for the Christian divide, which Jaimiss said separated the East Fork of the Chandalar from Christian River. For ninety miles this country back of the river is much like the Yukon Flats country, low, marshy, dotted with little lakes and slews, and covered with scrub brush and scrub timber, spruce and the like, that made of the going an awful task.

We may have covered a little more ground that second day, but I doubt it. I figured it at fifteen miles. The thermometer hanging outside the tent showed twenty-six degrees below zero. We had broken trail every foot of the way.

The next morning it was colder. The thermometer showed thirty-eight below. I knew it would drop when

Monkey and Candy came into the tent and curled up beside me, covered their noses with their bushy tails and went to sleep. I worked a good part of the next day right behind the dogs, with a rope across my shoulders, pulling by the neck for all there was in me. It was a heart-breaking job.

Owens, poor devil, came into camp like a snail, long after we had supper ready. He was so tired he couldn't eat. Jaimiss and I fed the dogs, and I insisted Owens turn in and rest. He was certainly willing. It was just forty below, with a light fog in the air. We made our first cache for the return trip at a point about fifty miles from Fort Yukon. I planned to make these caches every fifty miles until we reached our destination.

You might get by with murder, perhaps, in Alaska, but you can never get by for cache violation. Food is put into water-proof containers, hoisted on to some limb high enough to be safe from prowling animals, but in full sight of passers-by, and there it will stay until hell freezes over, unless you go get it. Sometimes a cache is broken into, but only in cases of extreme need; and if the guy who does it, doesn't leave a note with his name on it, or ask the next road-house to tell the owner that he's taken what he needed, and make reparation as soon as he can, if he can, well . . . it's just too bad for him, that's all.

Next day, about half the dogs had to be moccasined. The small, curly underbrush tore their feet and rubbed off fur and hair just above the paws. We were not making over fifteen miles a day. It was still a flat country,

many small, marsh-like lakes, covered deep with snow, plenty of hard, curly, scrubby brush peeping just above the snow, and the devil to snow-shoe through, besides tearing the dogs' feet all to pieces. What a relief it was to see the foot-hills; but they were some distance away.

Next day Jaimiss carried the rifle in the hope of seeing fresh meat, a rabbit or spruce hen. It was bacon and beans, bacon and beans! We still had a loaf of Mrs. Elliott's bread left. Then it would be "bannocks" baked in a frying pan. Not so good! We also had scrambled powdered eggs. They were fine. But I had one three-pound can of plum pudding hidden away in my toboggan, which I planned for Christmas dinner, with a little dash of Hudson Bay rum to help thaw it out as it went down. I had one bottle of old red-seal 150 proof Hudson Bay Rum packed carefully away for just such an emergency as Christmas dinner.

Well, on the sixth day out, Jaimiss told me we were not making fifteen miles a day, for, if we had been, we should have reached a lake which he said was about ninety miles from Fort Yukon. It was forty-three below that morning. We all had our noses, chins and cheeks frost-bitten. Our whiskers weren't long enough yet to give us much protection.

We crossed the lake the next afternoon. Jaimiss called it Rat Lake. This is not the Rat Lake located near the Porcupine River, and—unlike this—shown on the maps. I never saw so many musk-rat nests in my life. I counted over a hundred in crossing the lake. Rat Lake is a large, swamp-like affair, more than half a mile wide

and about three miles long, and is a little over a hundred miles from Fort Yukon. If it had been clear we could have seen the foot-hills, but that forty-below weather brought fog which shut in everything. I had a talk with Jaimiss that night. According to him, in four or five days more we would reach Christian Village, now abandoned, but formerly the home of Chief Christian and his people. From Christian Village, we would be in the foot-hills, and from there climb the Christian divide. We would then have Christian River on the east, he said, and the East Fork of the Chandalar on our west.

Jaimiss had killed two rabbits, and we had them stewed with a heavy, thick, flour gravy for supper. Only one thing was the matter. There wasn't enough of them. Shooting rabbits with a thirty-thirty, and not hitting them in the head, leaves little rabbit. We hadn't seen a moose track so far.

We made another cache but still the load was heavy and the going very, very slow. The next night we camped on Christian River.

Christian River is not on any map of Alaska I have seen, although many people know of the river and have been on the lower end of it. But maps have the rivers of this region so out of place that it is almost impossible to unscramble them. However, I'll try to describe this part of Alaska for you.

Christian River is not a large river. It comes out of the foot-hills that spread across the country in a general easterly-westerly direction from a point just below the

junction of the East Fork with the main stream, and continues on east and north toward the tributaries of the Big Salmon, or Sheenjek River, a tributary of the Porcupine. In fact, many of these rivers wind through these foot-hills up toward the slopes of the Endicotts, and, after winding out of the hills, they flow in a general south-westerly direction toward the Yukon basin.

There is fairly good, but small timber along the banks of the Christian River; in some places the timber widens out and extends back toward the hills that shut the river in. The farther north we went the smaller and scarcer this timber, occurring in patches, as we went on north. The whole country through here is one of rolling hills until you reach the divide, from where one can, on a clear day, look off to the west and down into the valley of the East Fork of the Chandalar.

With fair luck, we hoped soon to reach Christian Village, as the foot-hills were not far distant. No sight of game, but we could hope for a possible caribou when we got into the hills. Fresh meat would certainly be a treat.

We mushed into Christian Village on December 11th, having encountered many overflows, and traveled four hours in the darkness to get there. The toboggans were heavy with ice; more than a quarter of an inch, frozen hard and smooth. This made them slip along the trail with half the effort. We decided to try to follow out this ice idea, provided we could keep the bottoms of the toboggans covered without too much extra work.

Very tired and with the dogs needing attention, we camped in the village over the twelfth, and were comfortable for the first time since leaving Fort Yukon—sleeping in a warm cabin, with a big fire going. This village, though it had been deserted for years, was in almost perfect condition. There were more than fifty log cabins: some quite artistic, with willow lattice-work decorating the porches. The location was ideal, just inside the foot-hills in a small valley coming down from the mountains. The village was on the left bank of the Christian River, with a level and heavily timbered area of land running back a half-mile or more to the hills; on the right bank of the river, opposite the village, it was less than a quarter of a mile to the hills. The river here was a narrow, swift stream, with gravel bar, then a cut bank, and so on, up and down stream, and covered with good timber as far as the eye could see. In fact, the Christian River in all its length, or at least as far as we followed it, is of the same nature—swift and narrow, banks alternating gravel bar and cut bank, gravel bar and cut bank, mile after mile. Not much variety in scenery.

There is a large meeting-house at Christian City, fifteen by some thirty feet, with a log steeple. It was used not only for church services but for social gatherings as well. Although it had been more than fifteen years since the Chandalar abandoned this place, it had stood up wonderfully. There were not three cabins with the roofs broken in, and in many of them the doors and windows were in perfect condition. Like their other vil-

lages this one was laid out in well defined streets and with a definite idea of design.

One can understand what the feelings of these people for the white prospector and trapper must have been, when they will pick up at a moment's notice and leave such a comfortable place as this was, and after the effort they must have put forth in building it. I was more than ever convinced it would not be healthy to let them know the reason for my mission. I cautioned my companions again not to say anything about it.

Owens and I were amazed at the detail in this little village. The meeting-house in particular struck us in a heap. These people then were, or had been Christian Indians, sure enough, and up to fifteen years ago, at any rate, had practised it.

We left a cache at the village; our toboggans were getting lighter, so the travel up the river was good, not so cold, only eighteen below. After about four miles we took to the foot-hills which led gradually toward the divide. We were above the timber line most of the time but did drop down at night to make our camp.

On the divide we had less snow-shoeing. Many of the dogs were already getting thin. Too long on wet rations. It was beginning to tell on them—that, and the hard strain. None of us, for that matter was taking on weight. Owens thought my big black leader, Tuesday, the most wonderful dog in the world, but Old Tuesday knew he had a strange driver. He would put his paws on my chest and look into my eyes, asking with his what it was all about. I darn near cried.

On the divide we were not troubled with twisty, scrub brush or deep snow, but the moss-covered hill-tops seemed never ending. And up there, without the crackling of brush, the silence was certainly weird. Not a sound, nor a moving thing in all that vast expanse, save the panting of the dogs, the slight scraping noise of the toboggans, the crunching of the frost-capped snow beneath our feet.

It was just one relay after another, up a hill, down into a narrow gulch, then up the steep grade again. On the up-hill we had many times to make two and three trips relaying one toboggan with both teams to the top. Candy sure upset the apple cart the first day. We had just come to the top of a hill and I had stopped to unhitch the dogs, when Candy spied a snow-white ptarmigan a short distance down the slope. He made one lunge, barking fit to kill, and at that the whole team went with him. Before I could raise up they were on the go, down the hill, hell bent for breakfast. I grabbed the gee line to the toboggan and held on, but I was being dragged on the ground, with no chance to get on my feet.

There was no stopping now, the toboggan was gaining on the dogs; it crowded past them, tipped over, and started to roll over and over down the hill, the dogs all swept off their feet, all tangled up in their harness, snarling, biting and fighting, and I in among them. In all directions from under the tarpaulin went the gear, dog feed cooker, pots, pans and eating utensils all in one wild race to the bottom.

And there we landed, the sweetest tangled-up mess of junk you ever want to see, the dogs fighting and chewing each other, and the toboggan riding on top of all.

Major made a slash upward with his terrible fangs and laid Monkey's belly wide open. I tried to grab him and got a nice long slash in my arm where his fangs tore me. If Jaimiss had not come and clubbed the dogs off with his rifle, that might have been the end of the story.

Well, I cut Monkey out of his harness and we took stock of things. It was sure a mess. It's just things as this that take the heart out of you on the trails, coming as they so often do when a man is putting forth all he's got just to keep going.

There we were, grub and outfit scattered to hell and gone, and one of my best dogs torn wide open by that devil, Major. I sat down, right there, and cried like a baby!

Finally, feeling better, I got up and we started to straighten out the mess. Owens dressed my wound and sewed up my parka. My shoulder was sore and stiff, but the worst of all was the thought of Monkey, lying out there on the trail! Faithful, good-natured Monkey. Another victim of that diabolical Major. I took Monkey's harness off, as I always do—the poor fellow deserved a rest. (There is a tradition in Alaska that if a dog driver buries his dog with the harness on, the animal will continue to work for him in the happy hunting grounds.) Then, having given him as decent a

burial as was possible, we once more took up our journey. And there, right in front of us, was another hill, and beyond that another . . . and another. God, would these hills never end!

CHAPTER VI

A TASTE OF THE TUNDRA

ON December twenty-fifth we certainly didn't have to hunt for our white Christmas! We were right in the land where Santa Claus comes from!

We camped in the timber on a branch of the Christian River and stayed there Christmas Day for a rest, and our plum pudding. I had not told Jaimiss and Owens yet what was in store for them. We were now between sixty and seventy miles from "Big Lake," Jaimiss called it, where we should find the last village of the Chandalaras.

From where we were camped we would have about sixty miles across tundra, without so much as a willow in the way of wood or timber for protection. The most hazardous part of our entire trip lay ahead.

Our Christmas dinner was a success, but what a job to prepare! We had caribou steaks, beans, dehydrated potatoes, plum pudding with the dressing out of the bottle, bannocks and tea. I've baked bannocks until I hate to look one in the face. The stove was so crooked from being thrown out in the snow to cool, that its top was like a scenic railway. I sat there over that thing, with the smoke in my eyes, and my hands so cold I could hardly wiggle 'em, and slapped dough in the pan, for four hours. Bannocks would be our only food on

the tundra. No hot tea, not another darned thing but frozen bannocks! Some of them were thick and some were thin, and if any of us got a bunch of thin ones, it was just too bad!

Well, I was squatting there making the darned things, and thinking my own thoughts, when I heard Jaimiss grumbling to Owens, as they moved around getting ready for the tundra trip. It meant a complete repack; we must have the things we couldn't do without, and nothing more, right where we could put our hands on them.

I had expected an argument when I decided to cross the tundra instead of dropping down and going up the East Fork. The river would be, of course, the easier and the safest. But striking out across the tundra I could save both time and food. So the morning we came to the place where we changed our trail, I said, "Fellows, I'm going to cross the tundra. It will save time and food!"

Neither one of them said anything for a minute, but they looked plenty. Owens was harnessing Tues and he finished the job before he answered.

"You're sure hell bent on committing suicide, aren't you, Hansen?"

"Figger it that way, if you want to, Owens; but it matches up pretty even anyway you look at it! We've been days longer than I planned for already. We've only got so much food! If we can cut our time by going through a little hardship it may save us from starvation!"

"A little hardship! Say, man, d'you know what it means to cross that?" He turned and swept his arm out toward the miles of it, dead white, frozen waste, the rolling hills rising one after another in an endless procession.

"Tundra! Him no good! No go!" said Jaimiss flatly. "No thing live there!"

Even an Indian hesitates to go into a dead world.

"You no say, Fort Yukon, you go across tundra," Jaimiss added, his black eyes gleaming hate.

"I didn't know it myself, Jaimiss," I replied. "You fellows know how the going's been. We've taken twice the time I planned! We've got to cross it, to make the food last out." I turned to Owens. "Well, how about it, Owens? Do you go with me, or not?"

Owens shrugged. "You're going. Any fool could see that! Well, I don't want to fight you. What's the sense?"

Jaimiss was watching us, his black beady eyes flashing from one man to the other.

"Well, Jaimiss, are you coming?"

He didn't answer, but gave me a look I won't forget and got busy with the load. He knew it was two against one.

We were four days crossing that damned tundra. We didn't talk any more than was necessary, for two reasons. We didn't want to freeze our guts by letting the air down our throats, and we didn't feel any too good about being where we were. We went around glaring at each other like a bunch of wild cats. All we

got out of Jaimiss the whole way was a grunt. During the day we fought the tundra, driving ahead, too busy keeping alive to speak or think. At night we spread my big wolf robe on the snow, piled the toboggans, then jumped into the middle of the robe, men and dogs together huddled under the tarpaulins, chewing frozen bannocks, thawed a bit at a time with candles, so we could bite into them. The greasy smoke from the candles helped the flavor a lot! The dogs chewed and snarled over their frozen fish. The odor under that tarp was strong, to say the least. An Indian doesn't smell any too good at close quarters, and a Malemute dog—well, he isn't a rose, I can tell you. Oh, it was sweet . . . sweet!

I don't know what was going on inside the heads of Owens and Jaimiss, but there were times out there in the middle of nowhere that I thought I was going nutty. I'd look around, yeah, look is good . . . for all across that damned place the fog was so thick I couldn't see farther than my swing dog's tail; and it would come over me all of a sudden . . . a sort of helpless feeling, as if no matter how hard we struggled, we weren't getting anywhere . . . and once or twice I thought, "Hell, what's the use of this anyway? Even if I do get back, it's just so long before I die." I tell you, something gets hold of you out there . . . you want to tear off your shirt and go right into it—plumb loco. You feel you want to let the damned thing get you, that it's too much trouble to keep going!

Sixty miles of rolling hills, much like the rolling hills

between the Yukon and Fairbanks, only more of them, and barren, dead, wind-swept, not a living thing, no scrub timber, no vegetation save the short tundra moss that lies—much of it frozen—between the snow and the ground. And wind! It was continuous. The snow, like pebbles, cut our faces. The blood froze on our cheeks. We suffered silently.

We were in a dead world of icy fog, groping blindly . . . following the top of the divide. I knew if we got to the end of it we must hit the headwaters of the East Fork somewhere. Jaimiss had told me that once we were beyond the divide we would come to the Big Lake country.

It was go up one hill and down another, every one of them just the same, until our brains got to spinning, and we didn't know which hill we'd gone up and which one we'd come down. We couldn't see a damned thing about us, to let us know what we'd passed. Even Old Tuesday's nose got mixed up. For the first and only time in his life he missed the trail. Jaimiss and I were ahead. We made camp as usual and waited for Owens. He did not come. Finally I went back. It took me two hours to find him. He had come up a hill and had turned and gone right back down the same hill again, headed toward Fort Yukon. He was groping around hunting for our trail when I found him.

The country was beginning to get me right, when a miracle happened. Gosh, I'm not religious, but I want to tell you if something hadn't happened about then to let me know that those frozen, wind-swept hills weren't

the only things in the world, I'm not saying what I'd have done.

The icy fog that we'd been traveling in ever since we struck the tundra, suddenly broke. It was like lifting up a bowl and dumping it clean . . . like the curtains in a theater parting and sweeping back to the sides, disclosing the stage setting . . . like, well, like nothing else I've ever seen. I want to tell you I felt like it was a direct act of God. That blanket of fog vanished in a minute and we looked down the side of the divide and there, below us, far off to the north, was a silver thread winding its way through a patch of blackness.

We stood there on the hill, the three of us, looking down. Jaimiss waved his arm. "Him Big Lake!" he said.

What a relief. Those cursed hills were at last behind us. We had nearly gone crazy with the sameness of them. Far off to the west, we could see the East Fork of the Chandalar, swinging in a wide bend toward us. It was both impressive and beautiful, twice as beautiful to us because until now we had not seen a growing thing in all that long strip of tundra. And there, off to the north, the Endicotts, gray peaks, thrusting up out of their mantle of white, and rising, like a huge battlement across our path. They looked like some of those pictures you see of Turkish towers, all tipped with tiny spires and minarets. Lord but they were beautiful . . . almost worth that terrible trip . . . just to have a sight of them.

Below us was the timbered depression which Jaimiss said was Big Lake, the place where Chief Christian held

forth with his tribe of Chandalar. We were at last in sight of it.

For almost three hours we traveled along the west shore of the lake, probably somewhere near its upper end. I tried to find out whether any river ran out of the lower end, but if one does, we did not cross the stream. Big Lake is, I should judge, nine miles long and three and a half miles wide . . . and Jaimiss told me it is clear water, very deep and filled with fish. The darn thing must open into some one of these rivers, but I can't prove it.

God, how wonderful a fire is! We hadn't felt anything but freezing wind against our bodies for days . . . we hadn't breathed anything but freezing fog that made every breath an agony.

We gathered wood . . . all of us . . . like men gone crazy. We couldn't wait to stand up to the blaze . . . I could have gone down on my knees and worshiped it.

Suddenly Jaimiss grabbed up a stick and began scraping out the burning pieces . . . stamping on them.

Owens yelled and jumped for him.

"Hey, what's wrong with you, you crazy fool!"

"I no crazy! Him crazy!" pointing to me. "Him build fire wrong! Him build white man's fire!"

Owens looked at me, then at Jaimiss.

"Over there Chandalar," Jaimiss said earnestly. "They see white man's fire, they know white man here!"

"That's right, Jaimiss," I said. "That's why I built a big fire. I want them to know a white man's over here!"

"You want they know that?" he demanded, plainly surprised.

"Sure! They'd know it to-morrow, anyway. If there's going to be any trouble, we might as well get it over with! I don't want them snooping around to-night . . . if this fire doesn't bring them over to find out what's what, then I'm going to make them a visit!"

I'd been doing a lot of heavy thinking on the way. The fact that those Indians could live in such a country had told me that they must know what to do with it! They'd know I was coming, by lots of ways that I couldn't even begin to think of. I might as well fight it out in the open as to kid myself I could sneak by them!

Well, the boys stood looking across the lake, and, like myself, wondering what was going to happen next. Owens went to his toboggan and came back with his rifle.

"Listen, fellows," I said. "None of that! This is my show. I'm running it. We won't show fight until we have to. When I want to tell those Indians why we're here I'll do it . . . understand? You fellows don't know anything . . . get me?"

They nodded.

"It'll be safer that way for you, at that!" I added. "Don't you even look like you'd ever heard of Clarke's body!"

Jaimiss grunted.

We sat about the fire, letting the heat soak in. Sometimes Owens or I spoke . . . bits of things out of our

own thoughts . . . then we'd go back to watching the flames. All the time every sense I had was keyed to a high pitch . . . but even at that they stood by our fire before I knew it . . . almost before the dogs gave tongue . . . two Chandalars!

They seemed friendly. Jaimiss made out a sort of conversation with them. Between grunts and pantomime they indicated that they would give us some fish if we were hungry. Well, that sounded good. They returned whence they had come, and were quickly back, the fish in their hands. They looked us all over, carefully, deliberately, then got up to leave. Through Jaimiss they informed us, "To-morrow, Big Potlatch, village. You come!" Which we decided to construe as an invitation. When the fire had burned down, we turned in. But not to sleep.

CHAPTER VII

A CRAFTY INDIAN CHIEF

IN a way my heart was not in the thing I was up there to do. Looking at the village these people had deserted, and the one they lived in now, I understood their feeling toward the white man, and my sympathy was aroused. But a man in my position couldn't let his feelings get away with him.

"Come on. We're going over!" I said.

Of course we took everything with us. As we approached the village I could see the great difference between it and the old Christian village. Where there had been all cabins, here was one lone cabin, the rest tents. I found later that the timber for the cabin, which was the Chief's home, had been hauled on sleds with dog teams from a great distance—arduous miles—as the scrub timber here was poor stuff for building. Grouped at the lake's edge was a scattering of ice igloos. Unwittingly I had come at their potlatch time, and the Husky Eskimos (so-called because of their great size) were visiting the Chandalaras. I expect some trading was done, but all we saw during our visit to the village was a general spirit of holiday making.

I was wondering how Chief Christian would greet me, and what he looked like . . . but I didn't wonder long, for he came out to meet us right away. I want to

tell you he was a fine figure of a man, every inch a leader. Very tall, as most of the men of his tribe are . . . sinewy, keen black eyes, a clear olive skin, and close-cropped jet black hair. He was clean shaven, though from his looks I should say he was never troubled with much beard. He had a small, sparse black mustache, and splendid white teeth.

I can't say he met me with open arms . . . but he did show a somewhat dignified courtesy. He talked through a fellow called Gilbert, who looked like a cagey bird. I took a dislike to him at once, though I couldn't explain why. Just a hunch, I suppose.

Christian wore a spotted brown and white caribou parka, with wolf hood and beaded moosehide moccasins. The minute he came out of his doorway, every living thing in the village . . . Chandalaras, men, women and children, Eskimos and dogs, all gathered round and stared. The minute, too, that Chief Christian set eyes on Owens I felt something in his manner . . . it wasn't a look between the two . . . but just a feeling . . . that made me wonder if they had not met before! However, I didn't have time to try to fathom that out, for Gilbert began talking in broken English.

"Chief Christian say him make you welcome."

"You tell the Chief I very glad to visit him and his people," I answered.

Now, I thought, he'll ask me what I'm up here for, and I was all set to lie to him, when Gilbert said, "Chief Christian says tell you come to meeting."

"Meeting? What kind of a meeting?"

“We have church services now.”

He reached in his back pocket and took out a small red Bible, and handed it to me. I was struck dumb, that's all. I guess maybe, down in me somewhere had been a sneaking hope I'd meet up with something like the sort of Indians a kid reads about . . . feathers and warpaint and scalp dances! And here I was being asked to go to church. Well, there was nothing to it, but to go. When Gilbert turned around with Christian, to lead the way, I saw a funny thing. Keeping company with the Bible in Christian's left hand pocket, was—in his right hand pocket—a wicked-looking skinning-knife. Gilbert wore the same kind of knife and so did every Chandalar I saw. As we walked along—everybody in the village trailing after us, with much chatter among themselves, about us, I suppose—I said to Owens, “Want to go?”

“I don't think we're invited,” he answered. “Anyway, we've got to put the dogs and stuff somewhere.”

“All right. You and Jaimiss make camp.”

We went to the meeting place and for the next hour I was in such misery as never before or since! I guess you've gathered by this time that I can't stand dirt or bad smells. This room was not over twelve by fourteen feet, and there must have been a hundred people in it. Not one of them, myself included, had had a bath in many days—months for most of them. We all stood, packed tight as sardines, the children between our legs and squirming about our feet. It was pretty fierce. The fact that all the Eskimo men were huge, raw-boned

fellows, most of them over six feet, and that all Eskimo women were very short and fat, made it funny! The women all looked exactly alike. I'll bet if you stood a bunch of them up in a row, you couldn't tell one from the other, any more than you could so many barrels—and that's what they look like, a row of barrels, as for shape. In addition, they all wore the same merry, eager expression. Whether they looked this way any other time than the potlatch, of course I don't know, but I imagine they are born with a broad grin! Well, during the service I was between a man and his wife, and when the man shoved against me too hard, I leaned on his wife's ample bosom. She greeted this with a friendly smile. Gilbert was the preacher. He stood on a box at one end of the room, and the service was in Chandalar. They seemed to be singing or rather humming hymns. As for the sermon, it might have been on the interesting subject of how they were going to dispose of me, for *all I knew! In fact, I didn't much care, if it let me out* in the open where I could breathe something besides the odor of stale perspiration. In the summertime the Eskimo gets into the water. In the winter, water doesn't mean a thing to him, except for tea!

At the close of the meeting, Gilbert came up to me. "Chief Christian ask you have meal with him," he said.

"You tell Chief Christian thank you," I answered. You can know I was thinking a lot of funny things, and my one idea now, was to bring the visit to a close, and get out of there . . . or else, come down to brass tacks with the Chief and have the fight out. But there

was no opportunity to do this. I was taken into Christian's house, and met his wife and two children. We sat down immediately, and all the time Gilbert talked. I began to suspect they were stalling for a purpose . . .

Gilbert said, "Chief Christian ask if you have bad time getting here?"

I explained what we had been through. Gilbert retold it all to the Chief. Then he said, "Chief Christian very sorry. Think we have better weather soon."

After the meal I decided I'd bring things to an issue, but no . . . Gilbert said, "We have many games now, on lake. Chief Christian want you make visit to all Eskimos before. We go now."

Nothing to it but to follow them out again for a round of the village. Gilbert told me I must not refuse anything the Eskimos might give me, or it would hurt their feelings; they would think that what they had was not good enough. And Chief Christian did not want their feelings hurt, as they were his guests. I hoped some generous hearted fellow would not offer me his wife! The more I saw of native women, the more my thoughts kept going back to a certain girl in Fairbanks . . . but, of course I wasn't thinking of settling down, you understand.

Anyway, everybody met me with a broad grin. I was invited, always, to have tea from the iron kettle that hung over a tripod inside the igloos. I expect the kettle was emptied, and fresh tea put in sometimes, but I never saw this done. The tea is kept boiling, night and day. The fire is not allowed to go out. The iron pots

were got from Henderson (trader at Flaxman Islands) for furs, who in turn traded the furs to the whalers for pots. I drank tea until I thought I would pop. I discovered that whenever an Eskimo can't think of anything else to do, he takes a drink of tea. The same goes with eating. Add to this the fact that he feels conscience-bound to eat down to the last morsel any piece of meat he happens to fish out of the food pot, which hangs outside the igloo, and you've got some idea of what those fellows can hold. I got on a regular tea jag, for the stuff, without exception, was black as ink, and strong as lye. I felt as if my eyelids were pinned back . . . and a good thing, as it turned out later. Well, there I was, full to bursting with a meal at the Chief's house, and the gallons of tea I must have drunk, when a well-meaning Husky grabs a ten-pound caribou shank out of the pot, and shoves it at me! Now what to do? I was sure in a hell of a fix. I didn't want to make Christian mad . . . give him any excuse for jumping on me . . . and he was watching me close, too, you bet! I was about to take the meat, and get it down if it killed me, when the Chief said something to draw the Eskimo's attention, so that he forgot all about me and the caribou shank. It was darn decent of Christian, and I'll never forget it. Later I saw the Eskimo smacking his lips over the same joint, so I guess there were no hard feelings.

The Eskimos did not seem to have any regular family meal-time. When anybody got hungry, he fished a hunk out of the pot. The mothers figured the kids would eat

when they needed food, and let it go at that. I saw one little girl, standing on the edge of the lake, sucking a long strip of frozen blubber, and gazing far off into the distance, and I wondered if she had any idea at all that there were other people than her own tribe and the Chandalaras, somewhere off there. When she saw me it was like sunshine breaking through clouds! With a radiant smile she took her tid-bit out of her mouth, and held it out to me. I expect I was the first white man she'd ever seen, too. Well, I couldn't hurt that little girl's feelings—the melted grease was running down each side of her chin—so I pretended to be tickled plumb to death, and bowed all over the place . . . put on a show for the kid. She giggled until she fairly shook. Later I saw her taking me off to a bunch of her play-mates, and doing a good job of it too.

"Now we go see games," said Gilbert, as Chief Christian made a friendly gesture. Again we were off, and again my cue was simply to follow after! I want to say that I enjoyed the exhibition tremendously, even though I was still wondering what was up the Chief's sleeve.

The entire population was on the edge of the lake, waiting to begin. I found that both the Eskimos and the Chandalaras are great gamblers, and the rivalry between them keen. The first number was a free for all dog race. The teams were six dogs, and a light toboggan. The race was to the other end of the lake and back. All was wildest excitement. Dogs barking and fighting, gears tangled up, and teams getting away and running wild without their drivers. The course was approxi-

mately sixteen miles. Single dog races followed, then snow-shoe races, and so forth. Men were shouting in both languages, laughing uproariously at the slightest mishap, and making sport of the losers. I noticed the Eskimos won two out of every three competitions. Their small Northern dogs outdistanced the Indian dogs. They seemed, too, better-trained, and more willing.

Then came impromptu dances. In this the Indian was far the most graceful. I remember one dance particularly. A misshapen creature, with a head twice normal size, not over four feet high, shuffled out on to the ice. Evidently he was a favorite performer, for immediately a great shouting arose. To the accompaniment of queer moans and cries of the tribe, he went through what Gilbert told me was the wounded bear dance. I must say that he managed to look like one, weaving and swaying, fighting against the death that was creeping upon him. At the end the boy sank slowly to the ice. He had worked himself up to a sort of fit-frenzy, saliva drooling from his fang-like teeth. On the ice he twitched and shuddered, and then stiffened out. Everyone was so intent on the drama that when it was ended there was perfect quiet. Two Indians came and carried him off, his eyes were closed, and his head rolled loosely on his neck, the saliva still streaming from his mouth. He appeared absolutely lifeless, and I judged he was in some sort of epileptic coma brought on by his excitement. Afterward there was much talking, and one Eskimo tried to imitate the bear dance, to the great

derision of his fellows. Gilbert told me that the Huskies came every year, and that the two peoples traded. The Huskies were very eager to get the wolverine skins that do not hold moisture, and they brought articles from the whalers to trade for them.

The Indian, I might say, is a born trader. Give him one article for another, and he can understand it. Give him a gold piece, and he just turns it over in his hand and considers it a pretty bauble. It doesn't occur to him he could spend it for the things he wants. That is why the Chandalar's got out when gold was discovered in their district. Gold did not mean anything to them. All they could see was that the white man was coming in, chasing away the game. They could no longer hunt, and trade furs! They did not even think to buy guns with the gold, but kept to their primitive way of trapping . . . luring the animal to the trap through its curiosity . . . a bit of red fabric, or a bit of bright metal hung where it would catch and reflect the light. The wild animal cannot resist a thing it does not understand. It must creep up on it and find out . . . then the trap. A simple method, but it yielded furs.

The white traders knew all this, and money was never handled except in a back room, out of sight of the Indians. In this way a balance of commerce was struck far below what the Indian could have bought with gold. The Chandalar was a keen bargainer also, when dealing with the Eskimos.

The tool with which the Eskimos sawed out the blocks of ice to make their igloos, was made from the

tusk of a walrus. Had I had more time, and less on my mind, I would have noted many more things of interest.

When the games were ended, Gilbert said to me, "Chief Christian says he invite you to his house, now for talk!"

I drew a deep breath. Well, here it was!

Chief Christian was waiting for me, standing by his desk. With a move of his hand he dismissed Gilbert, and indicated I was to sit. Then, for a long moment he studied me . . . and I felt a difference in his manner . . . a seriousness . . . a dignity that became a chief-tain. Finally he spoke,

"Why you come my country?"

He spoke in English. I was so dumfounded that for a space I could only stare at him. Then some of the things McInroy told me of him, began to percolate. You can bet I did some fast thinking. I had intended to . . . well, to get out of telling him the truth, you understand, but from what I had seen of this Indian that day, I knew he was far too intelligent a man to be hoodwinked by some weak excuse. I decided to come out straight from the shoulder, and at that I think I surprised him.

"I am a United States Deputy Marshal," I said.

His expression did not change.

"What have my people to do with your law?"

"Reports have come to our office that white men have come into your country . . . and have not come

back. That makes the doings of your people our business!"

"I know your law!" he stated. "Law made by the white man . . . for the white man! Is there in it one word for the Indian?"

"You may be right, Chief . . . but if one of our people kills another, the law punishes him! If one of your people kill a white man, d'you think we ought to let him go free?"

"Who says one of my people have killed a white man?"

"It is talked in Fort Yukon and other places. And look here, didn't you run a white man out of here at point of a gun?"

"Yes. I have run your white brothers out of here at point of my rifle! I admit! Why? Because they brought whisky to my people . . . whisky . . . the white man's bait, with which he debauches and degrades us!"

He got up and went to the window, looking across the lake, and far off.

"Out there is the last poor remnant of my once splendid people . . . my happy people! Time after time we have abandoned our homes, because your people have come . . . in swarms. We could not fight them and triumph! We came away, and left them the land. . . . One time all this land was ours . . . our country! We have given to you, without payment, almost the whole of Interior Alaska! I do not complain. That is the law of life. It has been so since the beginning! Can the lemming fight the wolverine? The marten kill the lynx?

The caribou the moose? Do the little fish swim when the mighty seenjik comes? The strong take, and the weak die . . . or hide! But now, listen you! We can go no farther! Here, with our backs against these mountains we have built our last home! We cannot go to the arctic tundra. We must have timber and game. We cannot change the habits of centuries and become fish eaters, like our visitors! Once, before your law came, my people ruled all this country! Game was on a thousand hills! Caribou and moose roamed by thousands! In the woods were marten, mink and wolverine! Meat and clothing for my people! We took only what we needed for life. We did not slaughter needlessly!"

He stopped, gazing into the past. The justice of his words hit me hard, but it was too big a problem for me to settle; it was just . . . too damn bad . . . but there I was, and I had a duty to perform, whether I did it or not could not change the history of Alaska!

"That was in the days of my grandfather. Then your people came. They found the yellow dust in our rivers. It made of them fiends. They came and came in swarms. They debauched my people. In one hand they brought their Bible, in the other they held your whisky! My father called me to him and said, 'You must take your people—for soon I shall die—far away from this home where you played as a boy, where you came to manhood. So, go you now to the white man's mission school. Learn there the ways of the white people! Perhaps in some manner Kowhulud does not reveal to me, you may be able to save your people!'

"I went to your schools. I learned your laws, that I might protect my people . . . as your law says all men shall be protected! Yes, and I learned, also, your ways of double dealing! Again your people came searching gold . . . that makes fiends of you. Gold . . . your true God . . . not the God of your Bible! My father died, and I brought my people here! We will trade with you in peace and friendship. But you shall not drive us out. We have nowhere to go! So . . . again I ask you, What does your law want with my people?"

"The body of the prospector Clarke, that lies in your country. If he was murdered, the murderer!"

"As to this man . . . I cannot tell you anything. If he died, is it so strange that a man should die in the arctic? Does his death mean that my people are murderers?"

"It is the talk. But we don't deal in rumors in our office. We get the truth! That's why I'm here! You and your people will always get a square deal from Marshal Love and his force! If a white man offends you, all you have to do is to tell us; if whisky runners are coming in here, all you have to do is to tell us! But right now my job is to get that body . . . not because we want to pin anything on you unless it's the truth . . . understand? But so I can take that body back to Fairbanks for autopsy, and so that if Clarke was murdered, the murderer shall get his punishment. Now, Christian . . . where do we stand, you and I?"

For a long moment he did not answer. In that moment I knew he never would answer . . . directly.

When he faced me his countenance was stolid. While he looked straight into my eyes . . . his eyes told me nothing . . . he had that closed-up Indian look . . . like a blind had been pulled down over his face. He said slowly, "As for you and me . . . I shall do what is best for my people as long as I shall live!"

Jaimiss was waiting for me at our camp.

"Harness the dogs. We're going right now!" I said. "Where's Owens?"

For answer he looked at me sullenly. "You pay me now! I go home!"

"What?"

"I no go arctic. You pay me now. I go home."

On the instant I knew what had happened. While I was being royally entertained about the village, they had gotten to Jaimiss, and scared him off.

"Why, boy, you can't go now, we're only half through."

"Me all through! Me go!"

Well, there I was. Losing Jaimiss was going to cripple me badly, but . . . when one of those fellows gets an idea, you can't pound it out of him.

"All right, Jaimiss. You go. But first tell me what's happened."

"Nothing happen. Me sick. Sick to my stomick. I go home."

"All right, Jaimiss, you go. But let me tell you something. You can't go and leave me flat . . . understand. You do something for me first, or by the Gods, you're

going to hear from me when I come back . . . and from our office too!"

"What you want me do?" he asked with sullen suspicion.

"This morning when I was visiting around I met a young half-breed chap, down here to trade at potlatch. His name is Henderson. You go get him. Tell him to come here. Say nothing to any one!"

I didn't know whether he was going to do what I asked, or not. But it was the only chance I had. While he was gone Owens came in.

"Well, Owens, we're in a sweet mess. Jaimiss is dogging it!"

"And you'd better too!"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean it isn't going to be healthy for any of us around here, and if you'll take my advice, you'll go back right now!"

"What kind of a guy d'you think I am? I knew this wasn't any pink tea, when I started. Go back! Not if I know it! What have these people been telling you, anyway . . . they sure scared you yellow!"

"You made a mistake to come over here!"

"Yeah! D'you think we could have gotten by Big Lake without their finding out? No, I didn't make any mistake. I wanted to see this bunch of natives, and what kind of a man they've got for a Chief. Well, I found out. I know what I'm fighting, now. Christian's a fine fellow! He's got a lot on his side, but that doesn't change the fact that I'm going to get Clarke out of here,

and into Fairbanks! And we're going right now! Get your dogs ready!"

"I'm not going, Hansen. Didn't you get me the first time?"

"Yeah, I got you, but I don't believe you. You're not the kind of a man to dog it on another, clear up here in God knows where! It . . . well, I just don't believe you'll do it, Owens!"

"I'm telling you you ought to go back!"

"And I'm telling you I'm not going back!"

"Then from here on you go without me . . . that's all!"

There's no need to go into all that was said. It was enough, you may be sure. But the fact remained . . . he wouldn't go another step.

Just then Jaimiss came up with the young half-breed, who turned out to be the son of Henderson, the trader at Flaxman Islands, as I had hoped. I told him what I wanted, to reach his father's trading-post at Flaxman Islands, and made him a proposition to guide me. He refused, but promised he would scare up some one who would. He went out and came back with a tall, rangy Eskimo, whose name sounded like Neepouch. He said a few words to him, then turned to me with the statement that "Neepouch, him guide you to my father's." The Eskimo looked efficient and willing.

"That's fine," I said, smiling my thanks to Neepouch.

"He will have his family ready whenever you say," young Henderson said.

"Man, we can't take his family," I protested.

The two chatted a while in Eskimo and Henderson said to me, "His family no go, he no go!"

"How many in his family?"

"Neepouch, his wife, two papoose."

I threw up my hands. "All right. Tell him they all go! But we go right now! You tell Neepouch I get him plenty things from your father to pay him. Tell him anything he wants. But we must go right now . . . tonight. I know he won't want to start out in the dark, but we must go—now! Understand, Henderson? No noise. No good-bys. No dogs barking . . . we go soft . . . all same run like wild animal run away."

He explained to Neepouch, and after much talk, while I fidgeted and fumed, they struck a bargain.

"All right. Him say he go. Him say he want lots things when he gets my father's where can see things."

"Fine. He can have the whole stock; but tell him much hurry! Meet me other side lake, right away!"

Well, I wouldn't let a murderer try to make it back across that country without some kind of an outfit. I told Jaimiss and Owens to take what they needed. I expect they also got some stuff from the Chandalaras.

I got my outfit together, and without noise, slipped out of camp and across the lake. Sure enough, there in the timber, Neepouch was waiting for me, with his wife and two kids. We were on our way!

CHAPTER VIII

A DASH FOR THE ARCTIC OCEAN

THAT was a weird mush. I couldn't understand Neepouch and he couldn't understand me. His wife never uttered a word all that night, merely greeted me with a broad grin the few times I got near her. The kids were asleep on his sled, wrapped in heavy robes.

I'll say this for Neepouch, he sure knew his stuff. *He never faltered, never stopped to search out the trail.* That sucker knew just where to go and the easiest going. For the first few miles I kept looking back into the night, stopping once in a while to listen. Neepouch knew what I stopped for, and he would kneel, with his ear close to the snow, eyes straining back the way we had come. In a little while he'd grunt something. Then, with gestures, he got over to me that there was no one coming on our trail.

The hearing of those people must be uncanny. At least they certainly have faith in it. And I'll say another thing. You'd think men who could not talk a word to each other would not be able to make each other understand. But Neepouch and I understood each other. A gesture, a twist of the face muscles, pantomime, and we got over to each other a hundred and one ideas in those days we spent together in that silent land through which our journey lay.

I soon felt a lot of confidence in that huge, greasy, good-natured Eskimo. Talk about a good musher. He was of the best. And dogs! Well, that fellow sure had them. Big rangy huskies that looked like wolfs to me, and in the lead, the smallest, prettiest dog I ever saw. You may have gotten the idea before now that I liked a pretty dog. That canny little leader, he didn't weigh more than thirty-five pounds, struck me in a heap. I traded Neepouch one of my axes for him later. We were both tickled to death with the bargain. I named the dog Koonie. He was a pure Flaxman Island husky, from the Arctic coast.

Our way led up toward a huge shadow that spread across our path to the north and west, which I knew to be the Endicott mountains. We pushed ahead as hard as we could, and morning found us right in them. Ahead of us, leading upward toward the west, was a long canyon-like flume. We stopped behind a turn in this pass where we were somewhat sheltered from the wind and fed our dogs, and had breakfast. I thawed a bit of frozen fish, and the Eskimo family gnawed long strips of blubber. We had decided it was not best to build a fire, for fear Chief Christian might have sent some one after us.

By the next day we were certain we were not being pursued. I tried to question Neepouch and with gestures finally got over to him that I wanted to know where we were going, and what the country was like. The sign language merely takes a little patience.

Well, you'd be surprised how fine a picture that fel-

low gave me by using his hands and snow. He piled up mountains, and gestured toward those beautiful, snow-clad spires that loomed ahead of us, indicated the pass, then wiped it all out, built up the mountains again, and smoothed out the north side, and by the very manner in which he did it—by making motions of spearing—got over to me that from there the land sloped gently to the ocean. And out in the ocean he piled a couple of rocks, and made motions as of paddling a canoe, then stepped out and walked. I knew he was indicating Flaxman Islands.

Down from the north slope of the mountains he drew a long, winding line . . . a river, the mouth of which was just opposite the island. Then he did what I consider a remarkable thing. I can't tell you all the gestures he went through, but if he didn't make me see that north stretch as a dead, treeless, lifeless waste, filled with storms, then I'm a Dutchman!

And every time I'd nod, he, his wife and the two "pa-poose" grinned from ear to ear.

We mushed on up and up toward the top of the divide. Unless you've seen the Endicotts, you have missed the most beautiful mountains in the world. I don't believe any work of God's could be more beautiful.

Snow-clad, their tops a long battlement of needle-like spires and pinnacles, some of them looking so thin and fragile that I wondered the wind didn't blow them down. I simply stared and stared, getting my eyes full of their beauty. The Alaskan Range, while the

mountains are higher, has no peaks like those. They are grand!

We camped that night so dog tired that we simply ate a cold supper and turned in. The dogs got frozen fish, and we had blubber. It tasted pretty good! Then we piled up our toboggans against the wind, scraped the snow clear, and with my tarps over us, and my wolf robe under us, all curled up together, dogs, and all, to keep warm.

I want to tell you, it's no wonder the Eskimos don't increase faster. When I saw that mother trying to care for her baby out there in that weather, say—it was fierce. And here's another funny thing. That mother was nursing both of those kids, the baby and the other kid, which was all of four years old. When the oldest would get hungry he'd simply disappear under his mother's clothes.

Two days later, we debouched out of the mountains and were on the northern slope. God, what a weary waste—sloping away from the mountains in swelling mounds, as far as the eye could see, not a thing to break the monotony, just a vast sea of white. I knew we were looking down upon the arctic tundra—that all men feared to cross. Neepouch pointed toward the west, and again made the signs of a river—the Kugura. I looked and looked, but there was nothing to define it, no timber, nothing!

Neepouch then drew me a map, showing how the river bent away to the west and swung back again. He even made me understand that at one point, near the

ocean, we would find wood for a fire. I studied the map a long time, him squatting there with his little beady eyes on me, watching my face and noting every expression.

Once we had gotten away from the mountains and had worked our way down into the lower country, it did not seem as cold as it had been on the Christian divide. Neepouch kept looking off toward the northwest all that day, and from time to time spoke to his wife, and she, too, stared off into the white distance.

That afternoon we crossed a small river, running up through a sort of valley in the hills, and I took it to be some tributary of the river Neepouch had pointed out. I learned later the main river was the Canning, or Kugura, as the natives call it.

Along toward morning the weather got a lot warmer, and Neepouch crawled out from under the tarps. He was gone about twenty minutes, and when he came back under the cover he and his wife grunted at each other for some time. They seemed to be worried about something. Neepouch, as soon as we were out, stared off into the northwest, and his wife followed suit. But I couldn't make out just what was worrying him. A rapid fire volley of gutturals to his wife, and they began to get their gear together and he made it plain to me I was to do the same. Then, with him in the lead, pushing his dogs for all they were worth, we were off, headed almost due northeast. I knew he was making for the low country near the river.

The warm weather continued all that morning, with

an occasional cold blast that seemed to spring straight from the Pole, then all was quiet. Not a breath of wind, just the stillness, broken only by the pad, pad, of the racing dogs' feet, the crunch of the toboggan. I didn't like the weather myself. But I really had no idea what to expect. It wasn't like anything I had encountered in the Interior.

The rapid pace brought the perspiration. Soon my face was covered with a film of ice, which I knew better than to rub off, and long icicles began to form on the ends of my beard. I only got wise to what those Eskimos were fearing when, with a shout, Neepouch stopped his dogs, swung them around in a circle, was out among them, unharnessing them. He gestured me to swing my toboggan up alongside his, and to do the same. His wife pounced on the loads and began to strip off blankets, robes, everything that could possibly be used for warmth or shelter. I knew we were in for something, believe me.

By this time we were working in a sort of gray dark, and now, from out of the leaden skies and the shadows came blast upon blast of wind and snow. We worked frantically in a sea of whirling, cutting spray. I could feel the blood oozing from the pores of my face to mingle with the perspiration and freeze there.

Neepouch bossing the job, we swung our toboggans on their side, ends together to form a V, then down went my heavy wolf robe. Meantime the dogs began digging themselves in. If I hadn't been so intent on other things that would have been a funny sight—now,

you'd see one of them, starting to dig frantically with his front feet; the crust broken, away behind him would go the flying snow in a scattering fan. First his head would disappear, and bit by bit, his body, until all that could be seen was a column of snow shooting out past a tail. Then the tail was gone . . .

As the wind grew stronger I knew we were in for it right. And we were. Minutes before our shelter was fixed to suit that Eskimo, the snow was so thick we could hardly see, and the wind was blowing a gale. Neepouch motioned me to crawl under the tarps where already his wife and kids had disappeared. Then in he came, bringing an armload of strips of blubber. Well, it was crowded quarters, believe me!

And there we were for three days, while outside the wind howled, and the storm raged. I don't want to go through anything like that again. I have a healthy respect for those blizzards on that arctic tundra.

In the end we dug ourselves out, from under about five feet of snow, and took stock of things. We were so nearly frozen that it was agony to move. And there I saw a wilderness tragedy that made me sick. The little baby had frozen to death, right at her mother's breast.

From that time on the smiles were gone from my companions' faces, and we completed our journey in tragic gloom. They wrapped the tiny thing in robes and carried it on their sled back to their home where later it was buried with proper Eskimo ceremonies.

The rest of our journey we mercifully had good weather. The night after the storm we camped in some

willows—the only timber I saw in this whole district—on the bank of the main river (the Kugura) and had the wonderful pleasure of a fire, cooked food and hot tea. And I fed the dogs. They were so thin and gaunt, poor devils, it almost broke my heart. From then on we kept to the river.

I never knew when we hit the Arctic Ocean. In fact we had crossed the entire distance from the shore to Flaxman Island (about seven miles) before I realized we had left the coast of Alaska. It was just the same white waste! Then, ahead of us loomed Henderson's house, and the sheds of the trading-post. These two buildings and a long rack that held supplies made up the place. I jumped from my sled and knocked at the door. It was opened by the Eskimo wife of the trader, and a little later I sat in his living-room, talking to him.

CHAPTER IX

DESOLATE WASTE AND A HEARTY SCOTCHMAN

HENDERSON was a Scotchman, weighing about two hundred pounds and standing about five feet ten; partly bald and with a big walrus-like mustache. A typical old, sandy-complexioned, canny Scotch trader. He dressed like an Eskimo, muckluks of walrus hide, pants and coat of caribou, with large wolf collar.

His home was the bleakest place I have ever seen. The winds of the arctic—one might almost say the Pole, for there is nothing between there and the Pole but seas of ice—blow gales so fierce that one cannot stand against them. Even the sleds were blown over, the dogs being blown right on to their backs and unable to regain their feet. The door of his home was at least a foot thick, made of huge planks that were once a part of the ribs of some whaling vessel. I commented on the door's thickness to Henderson and he said, "If it were nae so thick my hoose would blow oot the back."

There was absolutely nothing there but the two sheds I have mentioned and the cache rack.

Henderson had been there for years . . . probably is there yet. He told me he came there a young man. Much as I had become accustomed to the wilds and the silence, and the long, lone trips, I still looked at him with awe.

I thought he would have gone crazy long ago. Instead he was hale and hearty, with a great zest for life. His accounts, however, showed how much the long-spaced visitations of white men really meant to him. In these books he kept a complete record of each such visit and every item of the transactions. I knew that when I had gone, down into the book would go the record of my visit. But I had to thank him for the habit. It gave me the definite facts concerning Clarke and Geherty. Yes, that's the way to spell his name.

This is the story Henderson told me.

"It was the eighteenth of August, nineteen hundred and nine. Before the snows. Two men came here to the post and bought an outfit of grub and supplies amounting to a hundred and eighty-five dollars. They paid me sixty dollars in gold and currency. The balance in gold dust! They said their names were Clarke and Geherty. One of them, Geherty, I ken it was, was an old-timer, the other fellow was a younger mon, a big chap, tall, not so big framed. I think the mon would weigh about a hundred and fifty. He had red hair, and was smooth shaved. A bit of gray streaked the mon's hair along the sides and at the temples.

"His partner was an older mon, a mon about forty-three to five years of age; he stood five feet ten inches, and was stooped at the shoulders as a mon gets who has worked a long time with a pick. Blue eyes, a heavy head of black hair, soft like and wavy, dark eyebrows, a bit heavy and a fairish beard, sandy complected as was his mustache. One ear was cut straight off on the

outer edge, and there was a band of freckles like over the bridge of his nose which was prominent. I take it the mon would weigh aboot a hundred sixty-five pounds. His teeth were ver-ry large and prominent and wide apart. He smoked a clay pipe. The mon seemed to be positeeve in his mind."

Henderson puffed at his pipe and studied his notebook. "This gold dust they gave me, was not a large nugget, but fine gold. The two men said they were prospectors, a fact which I kenned at a glance. They said they were prospecting over yon in the Chandalar country on a treebutary of the East Fork."

Again he stared out through the seal bladder window.

"When they paid me in the dust, I asked if they had made a strike. They said, 'no,' that the dust was from the Old Caro diggings where they had worked before coming into the upper country. They stayed only one day, seemed anxious to get back to their workings. They had come on foot, and were in a hurry to get back before the storms."

He puffed a while, staring off, then looked directly at me, where I sat opposite, listening.

"'Tis no a habit with me to doubt a mon, but I did not believe their story aboot the gold. I felt certain they had made a strike over yon. So the day after they left, I sent two Eskimos to trail them. All I wanted to know was what treebutary o' the East Fork they went down from the summit o' the mountains. My natives came back and told me, 'Wind River . . . they go down!'

“All that winter I nursed the idea they had gold, but I decided not to pay them a visit until April, then the water would be running and if they were in the gold, they would be sluicing and cleaning up. I found their camp on the twenty-ninth of April, about eighteen miles down Wind River, where it is still confined to the hills.

“I first saw their tent from a little distance. I came right up to it without seeing a soul in sight, not even a dog, or hearing a sound. I called out aloud as I approached the tent. No answer. I opened the flap of the tent. No one was in. I stepped to the bank of the stream, which was a distance of only five or six feet, and there, lying before me, just a few feet down stream, was the body of a mon.

“The smell was bad, but otherwise the body was in good condition. Face, hands and all looked quite natural. I recognized Clarke. After considerable search, I failed to find any trace of the other mon, Geherty. I looked for their cache of grub, there was none to be found, no dogs, no sled. Inside the tent showed their bedding robes and clothing intact, the bedding lay just as a man would crawl out of it. Nothing was disturbed in the tent. I could find no gun, or shells in the place. I looked everything over carefully.

“’Tis my opinion the mon had been dead not over three days when I got there. We made an examination of the body. Clarke had apparently been shot through the neck. I covered the body weeth the tent, and piled logs over it to keep the animals from molesting it.

"I then searched out their placer diggings. They had put down many prospect holes, but I found no indications of pay dirt in any of them.

"I came home. On the trip over and back I took the two natives who had followed them originally. I told them never to mention the finding of the body, which they never have. That's the redeeming thing of the Eskimo, tell him not to tell a thing and he never will.

"Then, back here I got to thinking it over and finally insomuch as they had not found any gold, I decided to write a letter to the authorities at Nome, and I sent it out with a whaler last fall. Then after that, who comes packing in here but Old John Cornell, a takin' of the census. I told him just what I have told you, and asked him to let the authorities know when he got back to Circle City. And now, here you are, a looking for the body. 'Tis there yet, I hae no doubt!"

Henderson closed his book and puffed away at his pipe, speculatively, as if he were again seeing Clarke lying there in the bed of that stream.

"Can you let me have one of those men that went in there to guide me to the body?" I asked him.

He puffed a moment, stared thoughtfully off into the dim corner of the room.

"I can send them weeth you to the headwaters of the river. I doubt they will go any further toward the body. 'Tis different altogether going weeth me, and guiding you, an officer of the law. They won't want to get in bad with the Chandalaras."

“Then you think the Chandalarers don’t want that body found?” I asked.

Again he puffed thoughtfully. “Well, I’ll no go so far as to say that. But you ken this. My natives trade with them. They will not antagonize the Indian, if they can help it. They know the Indian does not like the white. You will see they will not cross down over the divide to the body, or I ken them wrong, and I have lived with them for years.”

“That will help a lot,” I said. “From there I can undoubtedly find the body.”

“’Tis there yet, I’m sure. I will draw you a map of the place, showing just where it lies in the river.”

A day’s rest my dogs had to have; besides there was work that had to be done on my toboggans before I could chance that long return trip. I had been over the country now, and I knew just what to look for all along the way. Meanwhile Henderson sent out for the two Eskimo.

Late that afternoon, Henderson’s boy, whom I had last seen at Chief Christian’s village, returned to Flaxman Islands. I learned he had stayed behind a day to discover what he could about the new white man, then had raced almost night and day to catch up with me before I left his father’s post. This is his story.

“The Chandalar, they know why you come. An Indian, he hear at Fort Yukon, he race around you and he tell Chief Christian the law man coming after body, Clarke. They say nothing to you, but they get Jaimiss. Gilbert and Esias they work on him. He come

to you, say he no go any further. Then they talk to Owens. They think, them men no go, you go back to Fort Yukon."

"What happened after I hit out for here?" I asked. "What are they going to do about it?"

"I not know. They tell me nothing. But I tell you no go after body. Not go near it. You go back. You go through Chief Christian's village so they see you no got it. That way you live."

I studied over what he said, carefully, having no intention of abandoning my job, but wanting to see if it all fit in. I wondered for a moment if Chief Christian perhaps had sent young Henderson on to give me just that message.

"I'm going after Clarke's body," I said finally. "If it's there, I'm going to take it back to Fairbanks."

Henderson took the pipe from his mouth, and said, earnestly,

"'Tis no advising you, I am. But the lad is right. 'Tis a risk you are taking to go in there after it. Do you ken, mon, after you get it, you have to travel back through yon man's territory."

"That's neither here nor there," I said. "I was ordered to get it, and it's a job I've got to try and do." But I wished heartily for a time that I had given Chief Christian Marshal Love's message about the soldiers. Things didn't look so nice.

"A'weel, then," Henderson said, rising, "'tis an early start you'll be wanting to make and 'tis time we was in bed. You'll not be taking the lad's advice, a mon can

see that. You'll go! I'll have that map for ye in the morning."

Young Henderson and I hunted up Neepouch and got him into the post where I bought him what he fancied in payment for his help across the tundra. I provisioned the best I could—caribou meat at twenty-five cents a pound, gave my outfit a last going over, and hit the hay. To-morrow, I began my return journey. Would I ever get back to Fairbanks with Clarke's body? That night, I worked all night long in my sleep, racing Gilbert and Esias over league upon league of desolate snowy waste. Oh, that was a sweet night. I knew at supper-table I was eating too much, but Henderson's Eskimo wife could sure cook meat.

CHAPTER X

ACROSS A FRIGID HELL

I LEFT Flaxman Island next day. Neepouch and his wife were out to see me off, along with Henderson's two natives who had agreed to guide me to where Wind River could be seen.

Men form quick attachments in places like this. I was sorry to say good-by to the Neepouches, even though we had not exchanged one understandable word. As I looked at that courageous, fat, little mother, a big lump came into my throat.

"Tell her I feel bad about her baby," I said to Henderson, and when he did I saw a film of pain pass over her face, as she gutturalled something in reply.

People think that these Eskimos do not mind suffering as we do. That they are born to it. That they react about as animals do. The death-rate of babies is high, and the parents don't live very long, true, but they show emotion just the same.

I won't go into details of the trip to where my two guides left me. It was the same sort of thing, cold, hard going, no trails . . . but thank God, no blizzard such as on the trip in.

When we were through the pass, they pointed to the south and grunted. Then they started back. No use to

try to get them to go on with me, I knew finality when I saw it, and that Eskimo's grunt was sure final. That night I camped at the head-waters of Wind River. My thermometer registered fifty-eight below next morning. There was frost half an inch thick on my tent; stiff as a board it was, and must have weighed a hundred pounds. I decided to stay with the river, and make as accurate gage as possible of the distance I covered. Wind River was there, a small stream, swift, its banks, alternate cut bank and gravel bar. Considerable stunted, scrub timber grows along it, running back into the hills, so that a man can make camp every few miles. The wind had blown debris over the frozen surface in many places. As I neared the region where I thought the body to be, I had to stop and investigate every one of these. I wondered if, perhaps, Clarke wasn't lying under one of them, for I didn't have much hope that I'd see anything left of the camp, after the storms that must have raged since Henderson was there. Well, I played a funny game, out there in that frozen world, all by myself . . . going along a while, stopping to poke around some frozen pile of stuff, going on again, pushing myself to the limit. It got to be so monotonous that I was all but giving it one poke and going on, when I saw a Yukon stove standing in the snow of the bank a bit beyond, and knew I'd at last found the right pile!

There it was, more than a ton of frozen brush and gravel, and I knew Clarke was lying at the bottom, unless his murderers had returned to destroy the evidence after Henderson had been there. That thought

suddenly struck me. It certainly would have been a huge grim joke on me if they had!

I knew a more sheltered place aways back, so I went there, and made a sort of permanent camp, for as soon as I set my eyes on that job I knew it couldn't be done by one man in a day.

I spent a couple of hours doctoring the dogs' feet and legs, and remoccasining them. Their legs were raw, clear to the bone—poor, faithful fellows! I cooked them up a big mess of rice, fish and tallow, and they gulped it down before it cooled. They dug in then, quick as a flash, and I let them rest.

Next morning I got down to work. All that day I chopped in fog so thick I couldn't see a yard before my face. A spooky world of icy mist . . . I stood there and aimed the ax at the pile and let go. If it hit a rock, and glanced off, flew from my numbed hands, well, then it was to paw around blindly until I found it. Once I lost it for two or three hours, went around on all fours, scraping my hands over every inch of the snow and ice within five feet of the body . . . the perspiration had frozen in a mask of ice over my face, and long icicles hung from my beard. When I was down on my hands and knees, I knocked a couple off, and the exposed skin immediately froze. When your face gets covered this way, don't disturb it, not if you think you'll go crazy if you don't get a scratch at it. The ice mask pulls and stings like hell, but let it alone! It's a protection!

That night I wondered if all my work was silly. It

was an even chance that Clarke had been removed. It seemed to me that that was the reason the Chandalaras had not followed . . . they knew I was bent on a fruitless mission.

Anyway, whether it was there or not, I had to dig down and be sure. It was colder that night. The dogs whined.

The next day, January fourteenth I think it was . . . God it was cold! My thermometer would not register how cold it was. It would only register to sixty-five below zero. My arms had pains in them like red hot fires running up and down. My ax was chipping away fast from cold and from striking rocks. I had one more, thank goodness. I looked at Koonie and thought what a damn fool I had been to trade a good ax for a dog!

It took me three days to get down to where I must hit the body if it was there. Chop . . . chop . . . and at last I had an arm, his head and shoulders outlined. Then I had to go slow. It was build a fire, thaw out the ice from around him, cut away the softened muck and gravel, a fire again, and repeat the process. My second ax was about gone, just a bit of steel, enough to hold it on to the handle, remained.

Chop and thaw, chop and thaw, scrape away the debris with my hands, until at last there he lay, just as Henderson had found him. Fortunately the weather had cleared a bit, a cold wind blowing from up the river rolled the fog back, and I decided I'd like to have a picture showing just what I had been up against

and how I had actually found Clarke, dug him right out of the bed of the stream.

I remembered how, one night, Jack Mathews, at a dinner party, had set his camera on a time exposure, and then had joined us at the table. When he thought he had waited long enough to get a picture, he got up and shut the camera. I thought I'd try it. I still had some films in my stuff somewhere. So I rushed back to camp, got my camera, set it up and focused it on the spot where Clarke lay, timed it what I thought ought to be right in that dim light, walked in and stood beside the body, waited, walked out again and shut off the lens. I took four pictures that way, with different exposures. I got one good one.

Well, then I went back to work. Finally I got him all loose from the creek bed, and now came the hard job. He weighed all of three hundred pounds, was just a mass of gravel, sand, ice and partly decomposed flesh. How to get him on my sled was the problem. I laid my tarp down, as close to him as I could, and at last succeeded in lifting him, a bit at a time, on to it. One hand and one foot came off. I gathered these up and placed them carefully in the tarpaulin. Then I wrapped that around him. I took another picture—one of him lying on his side, just before I put him in my tarpaulin.

Then I harnessed my dogs to the body and it took me a couple of hours more to load it. It was dark before I got him loaded and lashed to suit me, and then we hit the high spots back to camp. I was pretty weak by

then. To tell you the God's truth, I can't remember after that what I did . . . seemed like all of a sudden I caved in—just one little thing is still clear . . . as I rested, for some reason I dug down under my parka and into my short pocket. I don't know what for. I just did it. But I found something there . . . a little silver, good-luck medal . . . my hand clutched it . . . I can't tell you how I felt about it! It was like a life-line thrown out to me . . . something to tie to in a crazy, frozen world . . . I sat there turning it over and over until I went to sleep.

CHAPTER XI

THE DEAD COME HOME

ONE day followed another, and out of that terrible frozen land into which the man had gone, the girl got no word! Nights, when in her dreams she went to him, she told him he must make it through for every one was counting on him . . . for his duty's sake . . . for her sake . . . for his own sake!

There were snatched moments when the girl left a patient's side and slipped down to the hospital chapel, fell to her knees, and in a frenzy plead to the Heavenly Father and to all the Saints to bring her man back. The daily pilgrimage to the Marshal's office, and the same oft repeated words, "Any news of Bert?"

A shake of the gray-haired Marshal's head, but confident eyes meeting wistful ones—"Don't worry, Belle. He's coming back! I know he will!"

Then the Hospital again and the long hours of duty, the five minutes alone in the little shrine at midnight, the benevolent St. Ignatius listening to her prayer, and perhaps interceding for her.

Harry Horton found him, lying unconscious over the handle-bars. His dogs—scarecrows, a remnant of his former team—had brought him in.

Horton, staring down at this still, gaunt, apparently

dead thing, lying with his thin, emaciated face pillowed on the frozen corpse he had set out so many months before to find, could not believe that he was looking down at the man he once knew as Bert Hansen.

Even as he stared incredulously, he heard a sound behind him. The long drawn, wolf cry of the husky . . . broken off abruptly. He whirled around, and was in time to see the wheel dog, a creature with ugly head and red eyes, try to get up from its haunches, wobble, and fall with a thud to the snow. The heap quivered once, and then lay still.

"My God," he said. "Major . . . dead!"

And all of what happened to him after he began his long mush home with Clarke's body on the toboggan there in front of him, will never be told. If Old Tues, or Major had tongues . . .

When Mr. Hansen comes to this part of the story he says:

"I don't know what happened. I can remember driving ahead like in a nightmare . . . just sense enough to keep the dogs going . . . going . . . driving them like a fiend. . . . It must have been about at Porcupine River when I passed completely out."

They took Hansen to Mrs. Elliott's cabin at Fort Yukon, and she nursed him as if he were her son. For days he lay unconscious between life and death. For days he was in delirium . . . days in which he relived again his terrible experiences on the home trail.

Fragmentary pictures . . . etched indelibly on his mind by starvation, exhaustion and exposure. Pieced together, they are the only record of the home trail:

"I got you Clarke, old man . . . God it's cold . . . we're going home. . . . Lord, look at those hills . . . there's another one . . . up and down, up and down . . . must miss Big Lake . . . swing west. No sign of the Indians . . . couldn't see 'em anyway . . . fog thick as pea soup. Darn you, Clarke, stay put, will you! What you want to tip over like that for? . . . Hell of a note . . . mush you suckers . . . get him up . . . mush! If you pull anything funny, Major, by God, I'll skin you! Going to cook a good meal . . . lots of it . . . got enough for one more day . . . can't be far to that first cache . . . plenty stuff there. . . .

"God, the cache is *gone* . . . damn 'em! That's what they did to me . . . dirty sneaks . . . don't fight in the open . . . steal a man's grub . . . starve the dogs too . . . look at Old Tues . . . his belly's caved in! That's why they sat so damned pretty and let me go after you, Clarke . . . going to starve us out! Doesn't hurt you, old timer . . . ha! ha! ha! . . . good joke on 'em.

"Fifty miles to the next cache, Clarke. Let's go. Mush, you devils, mush!

"Hell . . . it's gone, too. . . . Look where the lousy whelps stomped the grub in the snow. No, wait, here's some fly-blown salmon! Ugh . . . if you ever want to eat fly-blown salmon, don't you do it! I ain't no Siwash! Must throw it all up. God, I'm sick!

“Look there at Clarke. Ain’t he sittin’ pretty? Going to make you get out and walk, darn your ornery hide. You don’t rate no Pullman berth. By God, it’s cold! Got by Big Lake. Make a move you brown devils and I’ll blow your brains out! That’s a hell of a fine gun . . . froze solid!

“Guess I’ll turn Major loose on ’em . . . he sure loves Indians! Christian City! I wonder . . . no, oh God, it’s here . . . it’s here . . . look at it hanging there, right where we left it, right there in that attic of the church steeple. God, Clarke . . . we’re going to eat! Get out of there you . . . Major . . . get out . . . damn you, you’ve eaten all the dog feed. . . . No wonder you pull like you was crazy, you damned pig dog, you. . . . Snap out of it, Clarke, and help me.

“God, my head’s hot. Mush, you fellows, mush! Where the hell is Sunday? Hey, Sunday, get up there and mush. Mush! Christ, here’s a lake. Look out or you’ll walk on the rats. . . . What’s that? My God, Clarke, that’s funny. They’re shooting at us! Get down, you dogs, down! Down, Clarke! . . . Say, that’s funny, they’re trying to put bullets through you, Clarke, old man. That’s right, lay down flat . . . we’ll wait awhile . . . shhhh! . . . they’ll think we’re dead! Indians don’t like to go around dead men. God, ain’t that ice cold! Think we’re dead. We’re dead!

“Say, don’t you know we’ve got to get up and get out of here. Sunday! Get up there! Mush . . . poor devil . . . did they shoot you? Sox, why don’t you stand up . . . shot! . . . through the belly. . . !

Well, there wasn't anything in it, poor fellow. . . . God! Wait till I get my hand ax . . . I'll keep it from hurting any more! There! . . . Poor Sox . . . never mind, boy, if I ever get my hands on those devils . . . Major, I've got my eye on you. Make a move and I'll bust you wide open . . . so help me. You damned ghoul!

"Mush, fellows, mush! God, look at him though . . . say Clarke . . . look at him . . . he's crazy . . . look at that devil pull. Mush, Major! Mush!

"Oh, my God, I'm tired . . . don't dare sleep . . . hey . . . wake up, Clarke. God, man, don't you know we've got to keep going? Easy for you! Who's crazy? You ride and I walk . . . we've got to make it . . . put on the champagne, boss . . . I'm coming . . . Belle, I'm going to marry you, girl. . . .

"It's just like this Clarke, old man. I can't leave you out here, can I? You'd freeze to death. . . . Then get up and walk . . . confound you, lend a hand . . . get the harness on them dogs! . . . Going to dog it on me, eh! That's a fine way to treat a white man. Damn you, Jaimiss, go on back then, you louse. . . . Now Chief, where do we stand? God, look at Brownie . . . he's dead. . . . !

"Porcupine River . . . Porcupine River . . . Tues . . . you, Major . . . mush . . . mush! Come on, Clarke . . . let's sing! Always sing to them when we're going home . . . what's that keeps pulling my feet? Clarke, you pull my feet out from under me again and damned if I don't let Major at you!

"All right, boys, mush! Hold on now, Clarke, we're going to race . . . hold on tight! Why don't you sing . . . Clarke . . . whoop her up . . . damn you . . . sing!

"There's a hot time in the old town to-night . . .

"Hold on to those handle-bars, Hansen, you damned fool . . . you're slipping. . . . Clarke . . . why don't . . . you . . . sing. . . ?

"Tararara . . . boom . . . de . . . a . . ."

"And when I saw Bert! . . ." It was Mrs. Hansen (Isabelle), sitting there in the shadows by the fireplace, who spoke. "When I saw Bert, my heart just stopped! I can't tell you what he looked like . . . Lazarus, I guess!"

We were all silent a moment. Then she went on:

"Al Garner and Jack Mathews had taken me out on the trail to meet Bert. We thought we could get to Fox before he did, and make him ride the rest of the way, but about seven miles out, as we were going down one of those long hills, we saw something coming up . . . dogs, dragging their poor, gaunt bodies . . . and a man . . . staggering along, stumbling, falling forward, and staggering on again. . . .

"I tore out of the sled, and down that hill, screaming 'Bert! Bert!' and Al Garner after me. Just before we got to him, Al grabbed my arm, and made me stop.

He stared at the man at the handle-bars:

"My God! That's never Bert! It can't be!"

"It's Bert. . . . I know it's Bert!"

“‘My God, look at poor, old Tues!’

“Then in a moment we all three had our arms about Bert and he was trying to push us off . . . I want to tell you I never saw such a sight! Those dogs! And Bert’s parka just hung on him. He was a skeleton, that’s all. He didn’t look any more like the man I first saw months before on the Steamer Selkirk than . . . than I do! Bert didn’t know it then, but the first moment I ever set eyes on him I said, ‘I’ve found my man!’

“My sister reminded me that we had come to Alaska to nurse in St. Joseph’s Hospital and not to be a little fool and lose my head over one of those rough Alaskans! But, when he looked at me out of those sunken eyes there on the trail that day, I’d never have taken him for the same man . . . his face skin and bones, and he tottered like a man of eighty . . . but I was so glad to see him walking at all that I started to cry.

“After we’d all calmed down a bit, Al said, ‘Bert, old man, you get on my sled there with Belle. Jack will drive you, and I’ll take care of this’—motioning to Clarke’s body. But Bert refused. Then we all turned on him, Al and Jack swearing, as men do when they are upset . . .

“‘What on God’s earth made you try it from Fort Yukon? You’re only fit for one thing . . . the hospital . . . and bed! You didn’t have to bring him all the way yourself, you poor fool!’

“‘I started this thing, and by the Gods I’m going to finish it,’ was all they got out of him, standing there, swaying in his tracks, his face gray as ashes.

“‘Oh for God sakes, show a little sense. Get in my sled there!’ yelled Al, and grabbed him.

“‘Not by a damned sight!’ he said. ‘D’yu think I went to hell and gone to get this thing, just to quit now? No sir! I’m going to take it in . . . if I die doing it!’

“I just looked at him and thought, ‘Isabelle, you’ve picked a man!’ and I married him the day they let him out of St. Joseph’s Hospital!”

Even now, years afterward, there is always a look of awed wonderment, when Isabelle looks at Bert, and helps him to relate this trip . . . for she is, perhaps, the only other human who knows the frightfulness of his experiences . . . given her bit by bit through the years, as he recalls them.

THE END

TWO ALASKAN TRADER HORNS

TUNDRA: Romance and Adventure on Alaska Trails. As Told by Former Deputy United States Marshal Hansen to The Eddingtons. The Century Company, New York

"Alaska? Aye, I know her! I've rushed from her front door right out through the back. I've driven my dogs from one end of her to the other. I've sung to them in parts of her where no white man has stepped foot before! I know her as well as any man can know her, and that's saying a lot—and leaving a lot unsaid!" Thus Bert Hansen begins his story, written by The Eddingtons from his account in the "Trader Horn" manner.

As a penniless youth in 1896 he got to Juneau, at that time "a big town of one long scraggly street lined with frame buildings and bordered by a plank sidewalk," with plenty of saloons and gambling halls. He saw first off a sign, reading, "Wanted—Packer, with a weak head and a strong back." He got the job, which no other white man would take. The round trip from

the McGinnis mine to Juneau, thirty-eight miles, had to be made once a week, and supplies packed from cabin to mine on other days. He nearly worked himself to death before he got another job.

In 1900 he went to Dawson, which had 40,000 gold-mad inhabitants, "the men gold miners and the women, in the main, gold diggers." He did not stay there long. He was always on the move. Wherever there was activity Bert Hansen was to be found. On a railroad job at Cordova, "mushing" from Valdez to Fairbanks in the winter, snow-bound with a surveying gang, fighting claim-jumpers and usually ranging himself on the side of law and order. His friendship with United States Marshal Love helped him, but it was his courage and love of action and his endurance that made him successful.

He brings back to life the turbulent mining camp and makes it picturesque and exciting by the introduction of incidents ordinarily found only in fiction. As the Eddingtons write it, Hansen's story

(Continued on Page 22, Column 3)

1930 Census

1 New York	N.Y.	6,981,927.
2 Chicago	Ill.	3,375,329.
3 Philadelphia	Pa.	1,964,430.
4 Detroit	Mich.	1,584,987.
5 Los Angeles	Calif.	1,233,560.
6 Cleveland	Ohio.	900,430.
7 St. Louis	Mo.	822,032.
8 Boston	Mass.	787,271.
9 Baltimore	Md.	805,753.
10 Pittsburg	Pa.	669,742.

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